BBC

goodfood

Middle East

February 2015
DHS15 | QR15

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HOT STUFF!

Creative ways with chilli

Recipes for romance

Keep it stress-free and stylish this Valentine's day

Celebrate

Chinese New Year
Contemporary spread for friends

WIN! Home accessories & luxe weekend break

Plus:



World Cup themed recipes



Inside James Martin's kitchen

CPI MEDIA GROUP

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Organic

working with nature





TESCO

Choithrams

full of goodness

BBC goodfood Middle East

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Welcome!



Move over December, February seems to be the new month for festive celebrations! Never mind the fact that we'll be on a high after our fifth annual awards night (all the details from that coming up in our March issue), but between Valentine's Day and Chinese New Year on one hand, and the various culinary events taking place in our neck of the woods this month on the other, it's going to be exciting to say the least. Throw the cricket World Cup into the mix, and we've got a cracker of a month!

We're catering – no pun intended – for all of these in this issue, from a simple yet stylish Valentine dinner à deux menu on p58 *(Dinner date)*, to an array of contemporary Chinese recipes on p46 *(Modern Chinese)* that will not only impress your guests at a dinner party, but will also ensure you'll never look at takeaway the same way again – who needs soggy chicken drumsticks when you can have fresh, homemade salt and pepper prawns in minutes?

Whether you're getting into the cricket yourself, or have resigned yourself to six weeks of widowhood to the TV set – unless of course, you/your husband are one of the lucky few who will be flying to Australia or New Zealand to catch some of the matches, as my cricket umpire husband is! – then why not embrace the spirit by cooking up a World Cup-themed meal? We're sharing some traditional breakfast dishes of the leading team nations (this is what we imagine the sports stars like to fuel up with before a match!) on p52 in *A champion's breakfast*.

Speaking of champions, there's going to be a fair few of those floating around as well, with the second Dubai Food Festival descending on us this month. Whether it's celebrity chefs cooking up a storm, or homegrown concepts coming into their own, and importantly, 'local' coming to the forefront – from Emirati cuisine to locally grown produce – there is a whole host of exciting, unique activities on offer throughout February. If that wasn't enough, there's the Abu Dhabi food festival taking place around the same time as well. It looks like food is having a real moment here right now, and the biggest benefactors of it all? You, the foodies!

On that note, have a fabulously festive February!

Sudeshna

Editor's picks



I love all things handmade, and these artisanal products from a Dubai-based potter are lovely, p11



I think real style is in the little details – such as these stylish hint mint boxes that no designer handbag should be without! p45



Surprising Seychelles should be on everyone's bucket list, p78

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BBC goodfood Middle East

Meet our Editorial Panel

The exclusive group of experts who are part of the *BBC Good Food ME* family:



Uwe Micheel A veteran chef, Uwe has been cooking since he was 12, and in the interim 30 odd years, he has picked up numerous awards, and has been serving as President of the Emirates Culinary Guild since 1999. A member of several international chef's groups, he is one of the UAE's most respected culinary personalities.



Alison Van Camp Nutritionist Alison has been promoting a holistic approach to good health through diet for the past five years, not only to private clients but also in the capacity of a recipe and nutritional consultant for various leading corporate brands and hotels. The Netherlands-based nutritionist has developed her own nutrition analysis system based on USDA nutrient values.



Danielle Nierenberg President of Food Tank, a United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization-supported non-profit body focused on sustainable agriculture and food systems, Danielle is a world-renowned expert on food issues, and a widely published and quoted personality. Qualified in Agriculture, Food, and Environment from Tufts University, New York-based Danielle aims to build a global network to promote safe, healthy eating.



Michael Kitts The Director of Culinary Arts at the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management has hung up his chef's whites, wearing which he had spent over 20 years working at various leading establishments in London and won numerous accolades, to turn mentor and teacher to young aspirants of the hospitality industry in the UAE's leading training centre.



Marta Yanci Founder of bespoke catering company Marta's Kitchen, and more recently, a boutique cafe in JLT, Marta's workshop, Marta is a self-taught chef who took her passion for good food and turned it into a career five years ago. Now a recognised face on the UAE culinary circuit, the former lawyer has appeared on TV in Dubai and her home country, Spain.



Andy Campbell A Scottish celebrity chef who now calls Dubai home, Andy has trained at Westminster College, and previously worked at various restaurants, including Michelin-starred ones, and also ran his own restaurant in London, before moving here to work as a private chef for exclusive events. He currently also consults with Arabian Health Care in Ras al Khaimah.

Menu planner

Whip up a delicious meal with recipes from this issue

Cricket World Cup party



Chilli jam ploughmans, p36



Salt & pepper prawns, p48



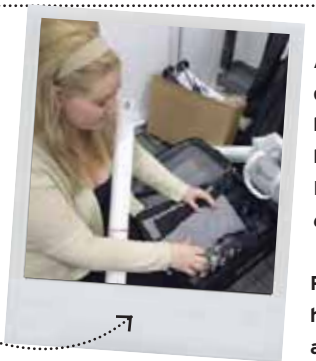
Veggie kofta pitas with pick & mix sides, p27



Cherry Bakewell sponge pudding, p43

Behind the scenes

Take a look at what the ***BBC Good Food ME*** team members got up to this month!



The lovely Siobhan from our events team hard at work prepping for the *BBC Good Food ME* Awards



Assistant editor Nicola dons a fishnet cap to go back-of-house at local chocolatier Delice's HQ, for her *The story of chocolate* feature

Photographer Anas gets hands-on with the food at a photoshoot

Your say

We love to hear from you!

INCREDIBLE ISSUE



Received my copy and I love the nine days plan (*Your Healthy diet plan*)! This is the first time I've come across an appetising diet. It looks delicious, and even if you don't want to diet, you will make the dishes. I noticed that the last page in the magazine of *Meet the Blogger* has changed to a very nice column. And as usual, a lot of interesting articles in the magazine.

Ralph Joudet

HEALTHY NEVER TASTED THIS GOOD!

This is the first time in my life, I've seen this kind of diet plan (*Your Healthy diet plan, January 2015*), as they are usually very rigorous. The recipes in the issue are diverse, tasty, rich, nutritional and healthy. All my previous diets have failed, so I'm open to trying this one out. Bravo *BBC Good Food ME*, you always inspire me with new plans!

Dounia Taha

JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR ORDERED

After all the festive eating of sweet treats, bakes and extra calories, I put my diet plan back on track and I'm so glad *BBC Good Food ME* magazine read my mind. Loved the concept of healthy dinners that I could plan with one set of main ingredients (*Eat well all week with 1 bag of ingredients,* January 2015), who knew! However, what I was most excited about were the recipes in *Vegan and delicious*. My New Year resolution is to be vegan twice a week, but I surely thought I was going to give up on this soon; as I constantly need to feed my sweet cravings. As I flipped through the magazine, my eyes instantly went to this article and I knew I had to make the Vegan cherry and almond brownies – I did not know vegan desserts could be oh-so-decadent! I made a batch of these to share with my colleagues at work, and they could not believe it had no eggs. I must confess they are so good, but so rich – but I'm not complaining. What a great start to the year with clean and healthy eating!



Tanya D'mello



Win!

The winner of the Star Letter gets a **DHS1,000 SHOPPING VOUCHER FROM TAVOLA**, the leading retailer of European products and essential items for the kitchen. Tavola is a one-stop shop for bake ware, tableware, high quality cookware and premium brands such as Mauviel, Le Creuset, and Zwilling kitchen knives. They have stores in the UAE and Qatar, as well as across the GCC.



Star Letter

COMING BACK FOR MORE

For budget reasons, I have not purchased *BBC Good Food ME* for a long time. I know it is only Dhs15, but it was one of the many things I had to cut from my monthly budget. Last week, while shopping, the cover of your January issue attracted me, especially the '9 days to a new you' title on the cover. Go on, I told myself, it is only Dhs15 – I bought it and I can say, don't have any regrets. I have always been a healthy eater, but personal circumstances left me to neglect myself and indulge in unhealthy food. Here was an issue that would help me with my New Year resolution. The nine days menu is amazing, and the chance to subscribe to the digital issue is awesome. It's also cheaper for the online version, and contributes to saving the planet. The *Destination Wellness* feature is not for my budget, but I will enter the competition to win the getaway weekend at Hilton Ras Al Khaimah. Best wishes for an amazing 2015 to the *BBC Good Food ME team*.

Sonia Rota



From our social media pages

- A happy New Year to *BBC Good Food ME* – *Eric Lanlard*
- Trying out one of the tasty recipes from the *One bag of ingredients* recipe feature – crossing our fingers – *Sony Matthew*
- The January issue is great! Can't wait to read the next one already. – *Muhtaz Syed*

TALK TO US!

Email us on feedback@bbcgoodfoodme.com with your thoughts and comments, and send us your photos with your copy of BBC Good Food ME!

You can also connect with us on social media!
Find us on:

@bbcgoodfoodme

@bbcgoodfoodmiddleeast

Or, you could write to us at:
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Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED, SHUTTERSTOCK

BBC goodfood Middle East

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WIN!

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Our recipe descriptions

V Suitable for vegetarians
You can freeze it
Not suitable for freezing
Easy Simple recipes even beginners can make
A little effort These require a bit more skill and confidence – such as making pastry
More of a challenge Recipes aimed at experienced cooks
Low fat 12g or less per portion
Low cal 500 calories or less per main.
Superhealthy Low in saturated fat, 5g or less per portion; low in salt, 1.5g or less; and at least one of the following: provides one-third or more of your daily requirement of fibre, iron, calcium, folic acid and/or vitamin C, or counts at least one portion of your recommended 5-a-day fruit and veg.
Good for you Low in saturated fat, low in salt.
Heart healthy Low in saturated fat, with 5g or less, and low in salt, with 1.5g or less, and high in omega-3 fatty acids
1 of 5-a-day The number of portions of fruit and/or veg contained in a serving
Vit C Iron Omega-3 Calcium Folate Fibre
Indicating recipes that are good sources of useful nutrients
GLUTEN FREE Indicates a recipe is free from gluten

Some recipes contain pork & alcohol. These are clearly marked and are for non-Muslims only. Look for these symbols:
P Contains pork
Contains alcohol

Store Directory

Contact numbers for outlets featured in this issue

Candylicious: 04-3308700
Ethan Allen: 04-3308871
Forrey and Galland: 04-3398850
Homes R Us: 04-4469820
Lakeland: 04-3236081
Sauce Gifts: 04-3883488
Tavola: 04-3402933
The One: 04-3955889
TWG Tea Salon and Boutique: 04-3253857
Villeroy and Boch: 04-3399676

Note: Prices in Qatari Riyals are approximately the same as UAE Dirhams.

Foodie file

What's hot and happening in the culinary world, here and around the globe.


Asia de Cuba


Alto Mar

DINE IN THE CITY

FOUR FAB NEW RESTAURANTS TO CHECK OUT

We Love!

✳ The newest contemporary Indian fine dining venue to open in Dubai is Junoon at Shangri-La, Dubai, a Michelin-starred import from NYC. With subtle nods to the Indian heritage in the decor, the restaurant serves up innovative takes on classic flavours such as Brussels sprouts with garam masala, and lamb biryani with meatballs. Creative cocktails and desserts (curry leaf flavoured ice cream, anyone?) complete the mix. Call 04-4052716.

✳ Authentic Lebanese cuisine can now be indulged at Zaytinya's newest outlet at Al Seef Village Mall in Abu Dhabi. The menu features Lebanese lamb kafta, Malfouf Mahsi (cabbage leaves stuffed with minced lamb and rice), and Lebanese kafta with baked potatoes and tomatoes served on vermicelli rice. Call 02-4474489.

✳ Transport yourself to a Mediterranean fishing village at new seafood restaurant Alto Mar, in the Jumeirah fishing harbor complex, offering postcard-perfect views of the fishing harbour, and a Mediterranean-inspired menu with freshly caught, mostly local seafood. Don't miss their delicious shrimps tossed in olive oil and lemon, octopus Lagareiro style, and slow-cooked seabass; homemade desserts are also on offer. Call 04-3435225.

✳ Asia de Cuba, at the Nation Riviera Beach Club, is Abu Dhabi's hottest new address, bringing its popular New York-born brand of Chino-Cuban cuisine, in a trendy setting. Expect dishes like shrimp churros with coconut curry, and spicy lobster sofrito with udon noodles, and a chicken version of Cuban classic 'chicarrones'. Call 02-6993333.

We Love!



Falling food prices

With the drop in global fuel prices, and the Euro reaching an all-time low in nine years, the GCC may experience a decrease in prices for imported food. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, the food price index fell last year by 3.2 points to average 188.6 points in December – the points are a measure of the change in international food prices. In the GCC, about 22 per cent of food products like meat, cheese, vegetables and fruit, are imported from Europe.



Water is the new black

It tastes just like water, but doesn't look anything like it! Blk. is the newest health drink in town, and the world's first fulvic-enhanced mineral water. What this means is that it's natural water, infused with fulvic trace minerals, which claims to boost energy, restore acid-alkaline balance in the body, and aids absorption of nutrients with its high electrolyte and antioxidant content, while being completely free of sugar, carbs and caffeine. You can find it at of-the-moment destinations such as the Salt food truck and Wanna banana on Kite beach, and the Doll House salon in Dubai Ladies Club, priced at Dhs18.



This just in:

We love this pretty pink Bialetti Fiammette Espresso maker –it's the ideal Valentine's gift for coffee-lovers! Dhs298 at Tavola.

Compiled by nicola monteath | Photograps SUPPLIED, SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Big in Japan

Move over mocha – the latest Japanese dessert that is all the rage, and has caught are attention, is a transparent water rice cake known as Mizu Shingen Mochi, which disappears within 30 minutes if uneaten. The jelly-texture cake is served with sugar syrup and kinako (a roasted soybean flour), flavourings usually eaten with mochi. Can't wait to try this one!

#What's trending

#bulletproofcoffee

Everyone from actress Shailene Woodley, to coffee enthusiasts, have been raving about the latest cup of coffee that's surprisingly good for you, bulletproof coffee! This is a cup of coffee blended with grass-fed unsalted butter, and MCT (Medium-chain triglyceride) oil, to provide your body and brain the saturated fat it requires. This coffee tradition originated more than thousand years ago in Tibet, and is known to increase focus, and energy levels instantly. Various recipes and techniques to make the coffee are being shared on Pinterest as we speak!



Home

"You cannot get an influence from the cuisine of a country if you don't understand it. You've got to study it."

– Celebrity chef Ferran Adria

US$1.5 billion
is how much the GCC market for organic produce will be worth in 2018, according to research from Gulf Food (the region's biggest annual food trade show).

Mark your calendars!

February 7 to 28

The **Dubai Food Festival** is back this month, bigger and better! **The 23-day food extravaganza** has four key themes highlighting **Emirati cuisine** (focusing on authentic, cultural food and experiences); **home-grown concepts**; **multicultural dining** and **street food**; and **international chefs and restaurants**. There's a wide variety of events and activities on offer, ranging from food-and-movie nights at the **Dubai Food and Film event** (February 6-28), to food truck gatherings at the **Food Truck Convoy** (February 8-12, 15 – 19, 22-26 at Emaar Boulevard, Academic City, JLT Park, Knowledge Village, and Studio City); pop-up eateries at the **Beach Canteen** set-up with celebrity chefs like Jason Atherton (February 6-28 at Kite Beach); and Urban Farm (February 7 at The Archive, Safa Park, and at Creekside Park on the 28th), where you can shop for handmade crafts and try delicious specialties from restaurants. Other attractions include **Mystery Dining Tours** (a journey across some of Dubai's top restaurants), and **Street Nights** (a gathering of local musicians and artists) as well as the popular **Dubai Food Carnival**, where we'll be at, too (find out details on p82). For the complete schedule of the event, and to book, **visit www.dubaifoodfestival.com.**





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Aisle file

Gorgeous gourmet buys, kitchen gear, home décor and more.



Customise a hamper for your Valentine, and include this **POT OF GOLD TRUFFLES BOX** (49 pieces) as one of the many gifts. Dhs129 at **HERSHEY'S CHOCOLATE WORLD**.



This elegant **TUSCAN SERVING PLATE** can be used to serve everything from an assortment of cheeses to petit fours. Dhs119 at **HOMES R US**.



Give your home a fresh, foodie aroma of stem ginger and walnut with this **ETTA FRENCH LUXURY** candle, made with natural essential oils. Dhs36 (plus shipping) from **BLACKBIRD-LONDON.COM**.



Place a bouquet of roses in this **LUXE LUMIÈRE PURE VASE** to up the glam factor of your fresh flowers. Dhs6,400 at **VILLEROY AND BOCH**.



Win your Valentine over with these gorgeous heart-shaped praline and passion fruit flavoured chocolates, packed in a stunning **BLACK LACQUERED BOX.** Don't mind if we tuck into a few! Dhs360 (27 pieces) at **FORREY AND GALLAND**.



This retro **SELETTTI MUG** is what we are sipping our green tea out of this month. Dhs130 at **SAUCE GIFTS**.



This **VALENTINE'S BREAKFAST CAVIAR TEA**, a delicious black tea combined with ripe fruits and silver pearls, is the perfect Valentine gift for tea lovers. Dhs135 (for 100g) at **TWG TEA SALON AND BOUTIQUE**.



Serve chutneys and dips with crackers in these handmade rustic-style **LIDDED POTS**, Dhs200 for a set of three, at **MAYA'S POTTERY** on **IDEYNA.COM**.



Haven't picked up a gift for your Valentine as yet? Pick up a pre-packed **VALENTINE'S DAY HAMPER** (Dhs175), filled with candy, chocolate and nougat from **CANDYLICIOUS** – you're welcome!

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED

Here to help

All your culinary and décor questions answered.



Expert chef, Marta Yanci, founder of bespoke catering company Marta's Kitchen, addresses your cooking dilemmas.

Q I'm planning on making avocado garlic aioli for a picnic. We will be out most of the day, so could you please tell me how to make sure it stays fresh?

A. The best trick to ensure avocado keeps green and fresh is adding lemon juice and olive oil. A good layer of extra virgin olive oil will ensure the avocado doesn't enter into contact with air, which is the main cause for it turning brown. Before serving, just shake the bottle well so the oil mixes with the avocado.



Q I made butternut squash soup and it came out too sweet, even though I didn't add any other sweet ingredients to the mix. Please tell me how to tone down the sweetness?

A. A good way is to add a couple of carrots and, if you like it, a teaspoon of powdered cumin to the soup. This will tone down the sweetness and will add a lovely colour too! Alternatively, you can add a little bit of potato, it will thicken the soup slightly, as well as tone down the sweetness.



Q Which potato is best for a mashed potato recipe? Also, do you have any tips on how to keep it crisp even after baking?

A. There seems to be an endless choice when it comes to potatoes nowadays! We have potatoes for baking, frying, and boiling. The key is in the starch. Potatoes that have a high starch level, for example, russets are best for baking or mashing, so this would be my preferred choice for mashed potatoes. Medium starch potatoes, like white or purple potatoes, are ideal for potato gratin or barbeque. Whereas low starch ones, like red potatoes or ruby crescent potatoes, are ideal for salads. Generally, I would suggest eating mashed potatoes right away, as they don't reheat well. A good trick is to add some sour cream to it, when preparing. This will ensure they stay creamy and silky.

Q How do I prevent steamed beans from getting over-steamed?

A. The exact time will really depend on how big the beans are, and whether you chop them or leave them whole. However, generally steaming for 4-5 minutes is enough for them to stay crisp but cooked. When you steam, water must boil, so the temperature will be high. However, it isn't the boiling water that cooks the beans, but the gentle steam the water releases, ensuring the beans keep their beautiful green colour.



Marta's ingredient of the month

Leeks are a perfect substitute when you run out of onions at home! Ready-to-eat leeks should be firm, and have dark green leaves with a white neck. If you have never cooked with leeks before, make sure you remove the first few layers, like you would do with onions, and discard the green part if it is too tough. A fantastic recipe is to sauté them with olive oil, add some mozzarella cheese and cream, and stuff some homemade crepes with it – a great vegetarian meal! Leeks are also ideal for soups and stews.

DESIGN Q&A

Interiors expert Pavitra Pujary, founder of interior design firm Pure Coalesce, offers practical home décor advice.



Q I'd like to be more eco-friendly with my kitchen décor. Any ideas?

A. For an eco-friendly kitchen, choose materials that are natural – quartz is a good option for countertops, whereas for cabinets, look for formaldehyde-free units, and make sure the finish is non-toxic or water based. Choose appliances with the Energy Star Label – to conserve energy. You can also use cleaning supplies that are plant based, non-toxic and biodegradable, or perhaps make your own cleaning products using ingredients such as vinegar and baking soda, to make an all-purpose, non-toxic cleaner. Recycle grocery bags, glass bottles, or jars, and always use cookware made of stainless steel or cast iron.

Q Instead of the usual red and white theme, could you suggest a new way of setting the table for Valentine's Day?

A. Red is considered the colour of love but you need not always pair it with white. You can also use different shades of red or pink, which is also suitable for the theme, and pair it with green. Create a runner of flower petals and place candles and pictures in between, the pictures can tell stories of special moments you have shared. And rather than just using red in the tableware, try incorporating the colour in food too, with things like strawberries, a sprinkling of pomegranate seeds, beetroot, and cranberries.



Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SHUTTERSTOCK



Amwaj Rotana

Jumeirah Beach – Dubai

Celebrating Food, Music and Life

21st February | Amwaj Rotana Poolside

Imagine a full moon in a clear sky filled with bright, gleaming stars, the warmth from the glowing lamp and the scent of an exquisite dinner prepared especially for you.

Gather your best friends, frost yourselves in white and join us under the night sky for a mystical evening celebrating food, music and all that's good in life. Amwaj Rotana invites you to A White Night - a luscious dinner and medley of premium and house beverages for only AED 295 per person.

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Anantara
HOTELS • RESORTS • SPAS

Tried & tasted

Each month, we review two of the city's top tables.

Peruvian



#dessertdemolition

Where: Coya restaurant & bar, Four Seasons Dubai

What's it like: Every once in a while, a new restaurant comes along that totally raises the bar, and becomes the place to be seen at, but for all the right reasons. Coya, the new Latin American restaurant at the equally new Four Seasons restaurant village complex, is one of those. The space at this London-imported concept, in typical Dubai style, is big, but filled with life, thanks both to its carefully thought-through décor – think Incan memorabilia, ceramic Pisco vats hanging from the exposed ceilings, and Mayan textiles, combined with subtly glamorous marble and metal – as well as its buzzing atmosphere (even on weeknights).

For starters, we opted to try the classic ceviche, Yukon gold potatoes topped with crab (I loved this so much, I hung on to a piece in case I wanted to have some at the end!), and chicken skewers spiced through with amarillo peppers. We were also urged to try the specialty beef heart skewer – it's got a strong flavour but, well masked with the pepper sauces, tastes quite appetising.

My choice of main course was the strongly recommended spicy beef fillet with crispy shallots and garlic, while my partner opted for the Josper-grilled corn fed baby chicken with aji panca peppers. With sides of Peruvian asparagus drizzled over with tomato dressing, and the day's special patatas bravas (crispy fried potatoes, topped with spicy sauces – my standout dish of the day!), we found everything to be cooked to perfection, and packed with flavour, thanks to the authentic spices used. For dessert, I tried a sorbet/granita version of classic Peruvian purple corn cocktail Chicha Morada, which was light and refreshing, while fighting with my chocoholic partner over his chocolate concoction with roasted white chocolate ice cream as well, which we both loved.

Coya achieves that rare something that good food is really meant to – become an emotional experience. With our friendly Peruvian waitress doing a brilliant job of recommending, explaining and serving, the restaurant comes out on top on all counts – ambience, food and service.

Best for: A stylish night out with friends

If you want to go: Around Dhs700 for two, without drinks. Call 04-3169600.

- Sudeshna Ghosh



#vibrantcolours
#burstofflavours

Where: Story Rooftop Lounge, Holiday Inn Express, Internet City.

What's it like: Every place has a story, and here it's told through striking art pieces, colourful free-hand wall paintings by a Spanish artist, and a menu bursting with modern Peruvian specialties, teamed with stunning views of the Palm Island in the distance. The relaxed venue boasts large couch seating with wooden tables indoors, and has two terraces – one with a bar and DJ, and another quieter one that's ideal for a relaxed gathering.

The concise menu features authentic street-food style Peruvian dishes that are perfect for sharing, while sipping on exotic cocktails. Ceviche was obviously something we had to try, and so my dining partner and I chose the ceviche mixto, a juicy bowl of shrimp, tuna, and scallops cured with melon and lemon juice – each bite was a beautifully tuned orchestra of tangy, fruity flavours. The Causo Anticuchera, a layered ceviche with mashed avocado, sweet potato and aji amarillo potatoes, topped with prawn skewers, was mushy and went down easily with the sweet sauce drizzled all over. Craving something hot to beat the chill – we were sitting outdoors – we chose the melt-in-your-mouth moreish chicken croquetas with a tangy melon and chilli salsa, which was crisp on the outside and soft inside. We also ordered meaty grilled lemongrass-flavoured scallops with a bed of crunch roasted potatoes and thyme, and a comforting bowl of creamy saffron risotto topped with tender beef tenderloin, which my dining partner polished off very quickly. With everything tasting so good so far, we were sure the Dulce de Leche fondant was going to be as well. We were right! The gooey dulce de leche oozed out of the cake, and the condensed milk-like taste and texture lingered around our palate beautifully, pairing well with the sweet caramel quinoa and banana ice cream it came with.

If you want to go: Around Dhs250 for two, without drinks. Call 055-7730010.

- Nicola Monteath

Best for: After-work catch-up



Photographs SUPPLIED and by REVIEWER

Flavours of the month

Our pick of the best restaurant offers, promotions and deals this month.


Al Dhiyafa Grand Kitchen

Casual brunch

Al Dhiyafa Grand Kitchen, Habtoor Grand Beach Resort and Spa, is the newest brunch in town, offering a relaxed deli-style environment for Friday feasting. Floor-to-ceiling windows flood the space with natural light, while the extensive selection of gourmet offerings cater to all tastes. Fill your plate with beef tartare, freshly made sushi, and chicken pineapple salad for starters, before heading back for tandoori chicken and butter naans (flatbread), pizza, tender ribeye with thyme sauce, Yorkshire pudding, and a wide selection of seafood, vegetarian, and chicken dumplings. You can also have pasta – gluten-free options available! – with your favourite sauce, or pad Thai. Stop by the ice cream bar to choose flavours like mango and chocolate, and garnish with your favourite toppings.
Fridays, from Dhs229 per person. Call 04-4084257.

One for the men!

Forget ladies nights, this one's for the guys. Rosso, Amwaj Rotana Jumeirah Beach, has introduced a new Gentlemen's night, which offers a pizza and two beverages for a great price. Trifoltata (mushrooms and truffle oil), Bufalina (fresh tomato, buffalo mozzarella, and fresh basil), are the top choices to tuck into.
Sundays, Dhs120 per person.
Call 04-4282000.



More choices

Little More's new additions are ideal for a quick lunch, or takeaway meal, especially if you're in Media City, Marina Mall, or Dubai Airport Free Zone, where they have opened a new outlet. Choose from beef pastrami sandwich with fries, Thai chicken skewers with sweet chilli sauce and green mango salad, or beef steak salad packed with greens and roasted capsicum.
Call 04-4324608.

Cantonese creations

Indulge in the authentic Yum Cha experience at Peacock Restaurant, Sheraton Dubai Jumeirah Beach, and try all-you-can-eat Cantonese dishes like soup, steamed and fried dim-sum, hand-pulled noodles, and stir-fried chicken and beef, from a wide selection. Round off the meal with a range of delicious, tempting desserts.
Fridays and Saturdays, Dhs129 per person.
Call 04-3995533.

Celebrate the year of the goat

Peppercrab at Grand Hyatt Dubai is the place to head to, to celebrate Chinese New Year this year. The special à la carte menu comprises of auspicious items like the Yu Sheng salad, which will be tossed in the air in front of you to signify wealth and longevity – the higher the toss the longer you will live. Those born in the year of the goat will also receive a complimentary Yu Sheng lobster salad.
February 18-25, à la carte menu prices. Call 04-3172222.

New Year wishes come true!

Visit Hakkasan to try the nine-course festive feast for Chinese New Year, and make a wish on specially designed ribbons – as part of the Wishing Tree tradition. The limited edition menu, devised by Michelin-starred Ho Chee Bon, will feature authentic small dishes like spicy lamb lupin wrap, dim sum platter, spicy prawns, and grilled Chilean seabass in honey, to name a few. Diners can enjoy the Kumquat wishing tree with chocolate, caramelised macademia and cocoa rocks, to end the meal on a sweet, happy note. *February 8 to March 1, from Dhs450 (Dubai branch) and Dhs 380 (Abu Dhabi). Call 04-3848484.or 02-6907999.*

Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED



Lunchtime treat

Take your colleagues along, or plan your business meeting at Tresind Dubai, to try the all-new business lunch in seafood, meat or chicken, and vegetarian options. Highlights on the innovative menu include deconstructed pani puri, braised lamb chops, malay lobster curry, and baked jalebi papad.
Daily, from Dhs125 per person.
Call 04-3080440.

Crazy about crustaceans!

Love lobster? The restaurants at Emirates Palace Abu Dhabi will be serving lobster in unique ways, just for this month. Enjoy the North Atlantis crustacean as a tortellini with fava beans velute, carpaccio with corals, lemon and caviar, hot dog with cocktail mayonnaise, or in a hot pot with bok choy, galangal and rice noodles.
Until February 28, call 02-6907999.



Valentine's offers



At.mosphere, Burj Khalifa

Looking to blow the budget? Do it here! Expect a special menu of Oscietra caviar with langoustine consommé for starters, followed by pan-seared foie gras, apple-passion puree, lobster, and Wagyu beef Wellington, ending with chocolate amateur with warm madeleine, and wild strawberry macarons with white chocolate 'chibouste'.
On February 14, from Dhs4,000 per couple (Dhs2,000 for an additional guest).
Call 04-8883444.

La Serre Bistro and Boulangerie

A personalised candle lit dinner in a French restaurant – does it get any better than this? Book your table at La Serre and speak to the chef to devise your own menu, based on the flavours and ingredients that you and your partner love. Roses and chauffeur service can also be booked in advance, at an extra price.
February 14, Dhs700 per person. Call 04-4286969.

Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri, Abu Dhabi

Book a private beach cabana just for you and your loved one, and enjoy a gourmet four-course menu in a stunning romantic setting. French bubbly, shisha, and a surprise for the lady are also part of the package.
February 13, Dhs3,333 per couple. Call 02-5098888.

Mint Leaf of London

Make this Valentine's Day special, by treating your loved one to a romantic three-course dinner menu, complete with live entertainment. Begin with a special beverage, followed by spiced crust soft shell crab, lobster tail, and poached scallop for starters. Relish pan seared venison loin with truffle scented lemon rice, cardamom spiked asparagus and beetroot coulis for mains, before ending with rose and strawberry mousse shaped in a bundled heart. Ladies get a gift bag too!
From Dhs599 per couple, call 04-7060900.



Emirates Golf Club

The Dine Under the Stars is a great surprise for your loved one. Get picked up by a chauffeur and head to the Majlis course, which will be transformed into a gorgeous private dining venue, with views of the lake. Sit under a canopy, and begin with bubbly, as your butler serves up a six-course feast of sea bream, and rost rack of lamb, to name a few.
February 14, Dhs1,950 per couple.
Call 04-4179999.

Fairmont Bab Al Bahr, Abu Dhabi

Make the most out of your Valentine's weekend, with a stay-cation at the hotel. The Suite heart package includes a one-night stay, special five-course dinner at Frankie's Restaurant and bar, buffet breakfast at Cuisine, and even a chocolate making class.
February 13 and 14, from Dhs1,499.
Call 02-6543000.



Interactive dining reinvented

The all-new dining experience at Mazina, The Address Dubai Marina, is the perfect way to get a bespoke dining experience. We check out what's on offer.





What is it: Kitchens in 1 (Kitchens of variety, interaction and flavors in one)
Why go there: The most recently launched concept at this international all-day dining restaurant offers literally anything and everything you crave, in a buffet-style open kitchen set up. With an outdoor terrace, large floor-to-ceiling windows with views of the marina, and little touches like whole garlic pods, onions and a bucket of cutlery on every table, the atmosphere is relaxed and rustic.

The venue boasts seven bustling cooking stations, where chefs are seen flipping pizza dough, making fresh noodles, and interacting with diners. The recommended dishes of the day are chalked down on blackboards – with prices for each – but if you are craving something in particular, ask the chef, and you can have it made for you – within reasonable limits of course! Begin your meal by quenching your thirst with a healthy concoction from the juice counter. Choose your favourite fruit and vegetable blends, or pick from the selection – we highly recommend the refreshing raspberry, coriander and ginger lemonade! The salad station offers everything from a creamy Caesar salad to a caprese with balsamic reduction, all freshly prepared on the spot. Seafood lovers must try the fresh, meaty prawn and crab salad served in lettuce cups, to start with.

Making a choice for main course can sometimes be a tough decision, but when dishes like dim sum, ramen noodles, kung pao chicken, tepenyaki or wok-fried beef, fried rice and noodles, are made right in front of your eyes, it somehow makes it easy to make up your mind. The chefs prepare everything from scratch, so if a particular aroma or dish catches your attention, ask for it, try the sauces you like – all laid out at the counter – and customise the spiciness, vegetables and protein. You can even join the chefs in the kitchen and give noodle-making a go. You could also try a succulent piece of steak, grilled prawns, lamb shank, or fresh Norwegian salmon, with a sauce of your choice – they offer everything from mushroom to béarnaise. Cheesy potato casserole, asparagus spears with garlic butter, and roasted tomatoes are just some of the many tasty sides. Freshly baked pizza, and pasta are also available at the Italian station. You can't end a meal without a sweet treat, and with offerings like ice cream, mini macarons, and chocolate fondant and sticky toffee pudding, there's no going wrong.

Visiting this eatery on a weekday is well worth getting out for. The laid-back vibe, friendly staff, and absolutely tasty food will make you feel as though you are enjoying a good home cooked meal – except someone else is dealing with the stress of cooking it to perfection.

MAKE A BOOKING
The Kitchens in 1 dinner concept is available daily. Prices start from Dhs55 per dish, call 04-4367777.

THE ADDRESS
DUBAI MARINA

Culina-reads

Reviews of the latest cookbooks, food shows and mobile apps.

On my bookshelf. . .



✳ **We ask the pros to tell us about the cookbook they can't live without!**

Roberto Segura, Executive Chef, The Act Dubai

"The last cookbook I enjoyed was edén.pe, a Peruvian cookbook, written by Gaston Acurio and Ferran Adrià, offering commentary and recipes from 21 different chefs, and profiling various ingredients, regions and cooking techniques. This book truly showcases Peruvian cuisine to the international community."

Watch this:



✳ **Mashawy** *on Fatafeat TV*

Mashawy is Arabic for grilling, and that's exactly what celebrity chef and *BBC Good Food ME* awards judge Tarek Ibrahim does on this show. Each 1-hour episode features the best of BBQ recipes, from classic steaks to creative ways to use the barbecue to make pizzas and desserts. He also shares tips on preparing a barbecue and other top techniques in his signature friendly, entertaining style.

Download this:



✳ **Travall** *Free for Android and iPhones*

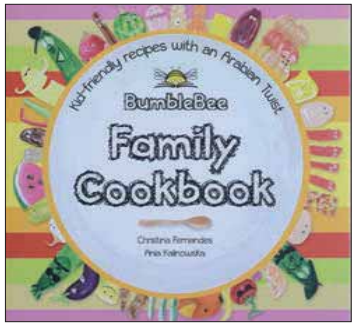
This homegrown app offers a unique insight into the UAE's myriad attractions with promotional videos and information on a number of hotels, restaurants, shopping outlets, activity centres, and sports clubs in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Users can watch mini-videos, read up on the concept, and find all the details – including contacts and map – on this handy app, as well as create their own profile, make videos, post reviews, and collect Travall points to stand a chance to win prizes such as weekend breaks and meals.

Text SUDESHNA GHOSH | Photographs SUPPLIED, JAY COLINA

✳ ***Family cookbook*** by Christina Fernandes and Ania Kalinowska *(Bumblebee books)*

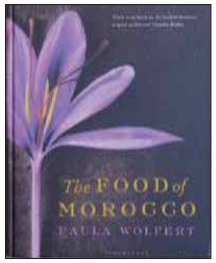
Finally – a cookbook for people living here, by people living here, focusing on what is locally relevant, both in terms of issues and ingredients. Aimed at encouraging children into the kitchen, the colourful book contains recipes that are easy, healthy and guaranteed to be a hit with the kids, all designed in a child-friendly format with fun illustrations and funny captions – sectioned under breakfast, lunch, snacks and treats and so on. There's everything from simple spinach tomato scramble and citrusy bulgur salad, to banana date muffins and baked pumpkin risotto. There's also introductory text on the increasing availability of local and organic produce, sustainable fish, instructions on local ingredients such as Gulf spices, as well as basic recipes for things like stock and homemade hummous, making this a contemporary Middle East-based kitchen must-have.

Dhs99, available at Jashanmal bookstores





✳ ***The food of Morocco*** by Paula Wolfert *(Bloomsbury)*



The colourful, exotic and fascinating world of Moroccan cuisine is brought to life in this big and comprehensive tome, described by a critic as 'the best book on the food of Morocco'. So much more than a recipe book, the evocative introduction opens up a window into the country's unique culture, culinary and otherwise, before delving into spice mixes, tips for Moroccan cooking and essential ingredients. Then there are the recipes – starting with salads, breads and pastries, soups, couscous, tagines, as well as ingredient-led chapters dedicated to fish, meat and so on. Authentic in every sense, don't expect a standard chicken tagine recipe here, rather it is 'chicken tagine with prunes and almonds in the style of the rif mountains'. Similarly, couscous is elevated to a delicious sounding Berber couscous for spring; specific instructions for making it the traditional way are also covered. There's a chapter dedicated to the famed Moroccan pastries too. Accompanied by stunningly evocative travel images, this is a delicious book to get stuck into.

Dhs219, available at Jashanmal bookstores

✳ ***The Luxury Collection Epicurean Journeys*** *(Assouline)*



This is a beautifully produced compilation of signature recipes from hotels around the world that belong to this exclusive group (of which Al Maha and Grosvenor House are a part, from Dubai). Thanks to the international nature of the hotels' locations, the recipes are delightfully varied – there's everything from gosht qorma (an Indian lamb curry) and Thai banana blossom salad, to spachetti with lobster ragu and sautéed saddle of venison. The book is sectioned by region, from far flung Latin America to Middle East and Africa and each recipe is accompanied by gorgeous photography, both of the food as well as the properties. Interspersed among the recipes are interviews with 'tastemakers', or high-profile social influencers such as Sophie Dahl, Jamie Cullum, Helena Christensen and world renowned chefs talking about their favourite dishes, food memories and so on. This is a book for any well-travelled epicurean's coffee table!

US$45 (around Dhs165), available from www.luxurycollectionstore.com


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Home Cooking

Inspiring recipes for easy everyday meals and stylish weekend entertaining

IN THIS SECTION



Celebrate Chinese New Year with these recipes, **P46**



Try our cricket World Cup themed breakfast ideas! **P52**



Speedy, stylish Valentine's date night menu, **P58**

Thai red duck with sticky pineapple rice, recipe p28

Make it tonight

Quick new ideas for your meals this month that are simple to prep and cook. Recipes EMILY KYDD
Photographs ROB STREETER



Cauliflower, paneer & pea curry

SERVES 4 **PREP** 10 mins **COOK** 45 mins

EASY V LOW FAT FOLATE FIBRE VIT C 3 OF 5 A DAY GOOD 4 YOU

2 tbsp sunflower oil
225g pack paneer, cut into cubes
1 head of cauliflower, broken into small florets
2 onions, thickly sliced
2 garlic cloves, crushed
2 heaped tbsp tikka masala curry paste
500g carton passata
200g frozen peas
Handful of coriander, roughly chopped
Basmati rice or naan breads, raita or your favourite chutney, to serve

1 Heat 1 tbsp of oil in a large non-stick frying pan, add the paneer and fry gently until crisp. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside. Add the remaining oil and the cauliflower to the pan, and cook for 10 mins until browned. Add the onions, and a little more oil if needed, and cook for a further 5 mins until softened. Stir in the garlic and curry paste, then pour in the passata and 250ml water, and season. Bring to a simmer, then cover and cook for 18-20 mins or until the cauliflower is just tender.

2 Add the frozen peas and crispy paneer to the pan and cook for a further 5 mins. Stir through most of the coriander and garnish with the rest. Serve with basmati rice or naan bread, raita or your favourite chutney.

PER SERVING 321 kcals • protein 23g • carbs 21g • fat 14g • sat fat 4g • fibre 9g • sugar 15g • salt 0.4g

Food styling JAYNE CROSSY



Sticky Chinese chicken traybake

SERVES 4 **PREP** 10 mins plus marinating
COOK 40 mins EASY

8 chicken thighs, skin on and bone in
4 tbsp hoisin sauce
2 tsp sesame oil
2 tbsp clear honey
1½ tsp Chinese five-spice powder
Thumb-sized knob of ginger, grated
2 garlic cloves, grated
Bunch of spring onions, chopped
50g cashew nuts, toasted
Cooked brown rice, to serve

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Arrange the chicken thighs in a large roasting tin and slash the skin 2-3 times on each thigh. Mix together the hoisin, sesame oil, honey, five-spice, ginger, garlic and some seasoning. Pour over the chicken and toss to coat – you could now marinate the chicken for 2 hrs, or overnight if you have time. Roast, skin-side up, for 35 mins, basting at least once.
2 Stir through the cashew nuts and sprinkle the spring onions over the chicken. Return to the oven for 5 mins, then serve with brown rice.
PER SERVING 450 kcals • protein 32g • carbs 19g • fat 27g • sat fat 7g • fibre 2g • sugar 14g • salt 1.0g

Pearl barley, parsnip & sage risotto

SERVES 4 **PREP** 5 mins **COOK** 55 mins
EASY V LOW FAT FOLATE FIBRE IRON 2 OF 5 A DAY GOOD 4 YOU

25g butter, plus an extra knob to stir through
1 onion, finely chopped
4 parsnips, about 500g, peeled and cut into chunks
1 garlic clove, crushed
10 sage leaves, shredded, plus extra to serve
400g pearl barley, rinsed
1.4l hot vegetable stock
25g Parmesan, grated, plus extra to serve

1 Heat the butter in a large saucepan. Add the onion and a pinch of salt, and cook gently for 5 mins. Tip in the parsnips, turn up the heat and cook for 8-10 mins, stirring every so often, until the parsnips are starting to brown and caramelise.
2 Add the garlic and sage, and mix through. Tip in the barley and stir to coat well. Pour in the stock, bring to the boil, then turn down to a simmer and cook for 35-40 mins, or until nearly all the liquid has been absorbed and the pearl barley is tender but still has a bite. You may need to add a little extra boiling water.
3 Take off the heat, top with the Parmesan and a knob of butter, then leave to melt. Give the risotto a good stir, then spoon into dishes. Top with more sage, Parmesan and some black pepper.
PER SERVING 629 kcals • protein 15g • carbs 107g • fat 12g • sat fat 6g • fibre 13g • sugar 14g • salt 1.2g »



Sausage, leek & fennel pasta

SERVES 4 **PREP** 5 mins **COOK** 25 mins EASY

1 tbsp olive oil
6 good-quality pork or chicken sausages
3 leeks, thinly sliced
400g fusilli
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 tsp fennel seeds
2 tsp wholegrain mustard
Zest of ½ lemon
Grated Parmesan, to serve

1 Heat the oil in a large frying pan. Squeeze the sausages from their skins into the pan and break up into small pieces. Cook over a medium-high heat for 8-10 mins until browned and crispy in places. Remove using a slotted spoon and set aside.
2 Boil a full kettle. Add the leeks to the pan and season. Cook over a low heat for 10-12 mins until softened and just starting to caramelise. Meanwhile, fill a large pan with the boiled water and some salt, and cook the pasta following pack instructions. Drain, reserving 150ml of the cooking water.
3 Add the garlic and fennel seeds to the leeks and cook for 2 mins. Stir through the mustard and sausages, then pour in 100ml of the pasta water and let it bubble for 1 min. Tip in the pasta, sprinkle over the lemon zest and toss everything together, adding a little more pasta water if needed. Divide between plates and top with Parmesan and black pepper before serving.
PER SERVING 600 kcals • protein 23g • carbs 64g • fat 27g • sat fat 8g • fibre 4g • sugar 6g • salt 2.0g



Thai beef & broccoli noodle bowl

SERVES 2 **PREP** 15 mins **COOK** 15 mins
EASY VIT C IRON

100g rice noodles
2 tbsp vegetable oil
250g rump steak, thinly sliced
1 red onion, thickly sliced
140g thin-stemmed broccoli, each stem cut on the diagonal into 3 pieces
½ small pack coriander, leaves picked and stalks finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
2 tbsp Thai green curry paste
165ml can coconut milk
1 tbsp clear honey
1 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp fish sauce (optional)

1 Boil a full kettle. Put the noodles in a bowl and pour over the boiled water. Set aside to soak for 10-12 mins.
2 Meanwhile, heat half the oil in a wok or large frying pan until very hot. Season the beef, add to the pan and stir-fry for 2-3 mins until browned. Tip into a bowl and set aside. Heat the remaining oil, add the onion and broccoli, and cook for 2-3 mins. Tip in the coriander stalks and garlic, and stir through the green curry paste. Pour over the coconut milk and just over half a can of water. Bring to a simmer, then let it bubble for 3 mins until thickened. Drizzle over the honey, soy and fish sauce (if using), then return the beef and any resting juices to the pan and warm through.
3 Drain the noodles and divide between bowls. Ladle over the beef and broccoli, and serve with a bowl of coriander leaves on the side, to scatter over the top.
PER SERVING 706 kcals • protein 36g • carbs 58g • fat 35g • sat fat 16g • fibre 4g • sugar 15g • salt 0.7g



Advertisement

BAKE YOUR WAY TO SOMEONE'S HEART

LURPAK® RASPBERRY ALMOND STREUSEL CAKE

PREP 20 mins | COOK 45 mins | SERVES 8

What you need:

For the streusel topping:

- 25g Lurpak® Baking
- 50g plain flour
- A pinch of salt
- 25g caster sugar
- 50g toasted flaked almonds

For the cake:

- 200g Lurpak® Baking
- 200g caster sugar
- 4 eggs
- 200g plain flour
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 tsp. rose water (optional)
- 1 level tsp. baking powder
- 250g raspberries

What you do:

Preheat the oven to 160°C / 180°C Fan Assisted / Gas Mark 4.

Grease a 20 cm spring form tin, then line the base with baking paper.

For the streusel topping, melt the Lurpak® Baking in a small pan, then stir in the flour, salt and caster sugar. Mix with a wooden spoon to make a crumbly mixture and gently fold in the flaked almonds.

To make the cake mix, put the Lurpak® Baking into a large bowl and beat with the sugar to make a light, creamy mixture. Next, beat in the eggs one at a time. If the mixture starts to curdle, add a spoonful of flour.

Add the vanilla extract and the optional rose water, then, using a large metal spoon, gently fold in the remaining flour and baking powder. If the batter doesn't easily drop off the spoon, add a little milk.

Spread the mixture in the tin and dot with the raspberries. Cover with the streusel mixture and bake in the oven for 45 minutes.

Leave the cake to cool in the tin for 15 minutes, then remove and serve.



LURPAK® BAKING

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Take on cakes, sweets and pastries with Lurpak® Baking by your side. The ideal blend of butter and vegetable oil gives a softer texture ready to mix straight from the fridge. It easily folds into cake mixtures and gives a light, fluffy golden finish.

/LurpakArabia



Benjarong
ROYAL THAI CUISINE



Thai Salad Fest

1 - 28 February 2015

Be enticed into a healthy selection of salads set on traditional Royal Thai recipes masterfully crafted with the finest of spices.This February, rekindle a tastier perspective on salad as we know it.

Amongst the must-try choices include Yum Pla Salad Grob (Spicy crispy fish salad), Larb Pla Salmon (Minced salmon and Thai herbs salad) and Phla Nuea Ma-Khuer Onn (Spicy grilled beef and eggplant with Thai herbs).

Dusit Thani
DUBAI

For reservations, call +971 4 317 4515 or
e-mail dine.dtdu@dusit.com

www.Dusit.com

Eat well all week

Give your midweek meals a healthy makeover with these new recipes – each one is 500 calories or less per person. Recipes Sarah Cook Photographs MIKE ENGLISH



Meat-free yet full of flavour

Food styling MARINA FILIPPELLI | Styling REBECCA NEWPORT

Veggie kofta pitas with pick & mix sides

SERVES 6 PREP 20 MINS COOK 30 MINS

EASY V LOW FAT LOW CAL FIBRE 3 OF 5 A DAY koftas only

2 onions, chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
Low-fat cooking spray, for frying
800g canned chickpeas, drained
100g fresh brown breadcrumbs
1 large egg
2 tsp each ground cumin and coriander
Zest of 1 lemon, 1 tbsp juice, plus extra wedges to serve
85g baby spinach
Toasted pita breads, to serve
175g fat-free natural or Greek yoghurt, to serve
Pickled chillies, or jalepeños (optional), to serve

FOR THE CARROT & TOMATO SALAD

200g carrots, coarsely grated
200g tomatoes, diced
½ red onion, finely chopped
2 tbsp vinegar
1 tsp sugar

1 Soften the onions and garlic with a few sprays of the cooking spray and a splash of water in a non-stick pan. Once really soft, tip into a food processor with the chickpeas, breadcrumbs, egg, spices, lemon zest and juice, and plenty of seasoning. Pulse until fairly smooth, then add 30g of the spinach and pulse until finely chopped. Shape the mixture into 12 sausage-shaped koftas and put on a baking-parchment-lined baking tray. Chill while you heat oven to 200C/180C fan.

2 Spray the koftas a few times more with cooking spray, then bake for 20-25 mins until crisp and golden.

3 Meanwhile, mix together all the carrot salad ingredients with some seasoning. Put the remaining spinach in a bowl and warm the pitas following pack instructions.

4 Serve the koftas with warm pitas, extra spinach, carrot salad, fat-free yoghurt and pickled chillies, if you like.

PER SERVING 421 kcals • protein 18g • carbs 70g • fat 5g • sat fat 1g • fibre 10g • sugar 10g • salt 1.7g »



Lighter treat for two

Thai red duck with sticky pineapple rice

SERVES 2 **PREP** 20 mins plus marinating and steaming **COOK** 15 mins

EASY | LOW FAT | FOLATE | FIBRE | VIT C | IRON | 2 OF 5 A DAY | GOOD 4 YOU

2 duck breasts, skin removed
1 tbsp Thai red curry paste
Zest and juice of 1 lime, plus extra wedges to serve
140g jasmine rice
125ml light coconut milk, from a can
140g frozen peas
50g beansprouts
½ red onion, diced
100g fresh pineapple, cubed
1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
¼ small pack coriander, stalks finely chopped, leaves roughly chopped

1 Sit a duck breast between 2 sheets of cling film on a chopping board. Use a rolling pin to bash the duck until it is 0.5cm thick. Repeat with the other breast, then put them both in a dish. Mix the curry paste with the lime zest and juice, and rub all over the duck. Leave to marinate at room temperature for 20 mins.

2 Meanwhile, tip the rice into a small saucepan with some salt. Pour over the coconut milk with 150ml water. Bring to a simmer, then cover the pan, turn the heat down low and cook for 5 more mins. Stir in the peas, then cover, turn the heat off and leave for another 10 mins. Check the rice – all the liquid should be absorbed and the rice cooked through. Boil the kettle, put the beansprouts and red onion in a colander and pour over a kettleful of boiling water. Stir the beansprouts and onion into the rice with the pineapple, chilli and coriander stalks, and some more salt if it needs it, and put the lid back on to keep warm.

3 Heat a griddle pan and cook the duck for 1-2 mins each side or until cooked to your liking. Slice the duck, stir most of the coriander leaves though the rice with a fork to fluff up, and serve alongside the duck, scattered with the remaining coriander.

PER SERVING 500 kcals • protein 37g • carbs 63g • fat 9g • sat fat 4g • fibre 7g • sugar 10g • salt 0.6g

Creamy cod chowder stew

SERVES 2 **PREP** 10 mins **COOK** 20 mins

EASY | LOW FAT | LOW CAL | CALCIUM | FOLATE | FIBRE | VIT C

200g floury potatoes, cubed
200g parsnips, cubed
140g skinless cod fillet
140g skinless undyed smoked haddock fillets
500ml semi-skimmed milk
Handful of parsley, leaves finely chopped, stalks reserved
6 spring onions, whites and greens separated, both finely chopped
2 tbsp plain flour
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
Crusty wholemeal bread, to serve

1 Bring a saucepan of salted water to the boil, add the potato and parsnips, and boil until almost tender – about 4 mins. Drain well.

2 Meanwhile, put the fish in a pan where they will fit snugly but not on top of each other. Cover with the milk, poke in the parsley stalks and bring the milk to a gentle simmer. Cover the pan, turn off the heat and leave to sit in the milk for 5 mins. Lift the fish out and break into large chunks. Discard the parsley stalks but keep the milk.

3 Put the spring onion whites, milk and flour in a saucepan together. Bring to a simmer, whisking continuously, until the sauce has thickened and becomes smooth. Turn the heat down, add the drained potatoes and parsnips, the lemon zest and half the juice, and cook gently for 5 mins, stirring occasionally. Stir in the spring onion greens, fish and parsley, and taste for seasoning – it will need plenty of pepper, some salt and maybe more lemon juice from the leftover half. Divide between two shallow bowls, serve with chunks of crusty bread and enjoy.

PER SERVING 443 kcals • protein 39g • carbs 53g • fat 6g • sat fat 3g • fibre 10g • sugar 16g • salt 1.9g



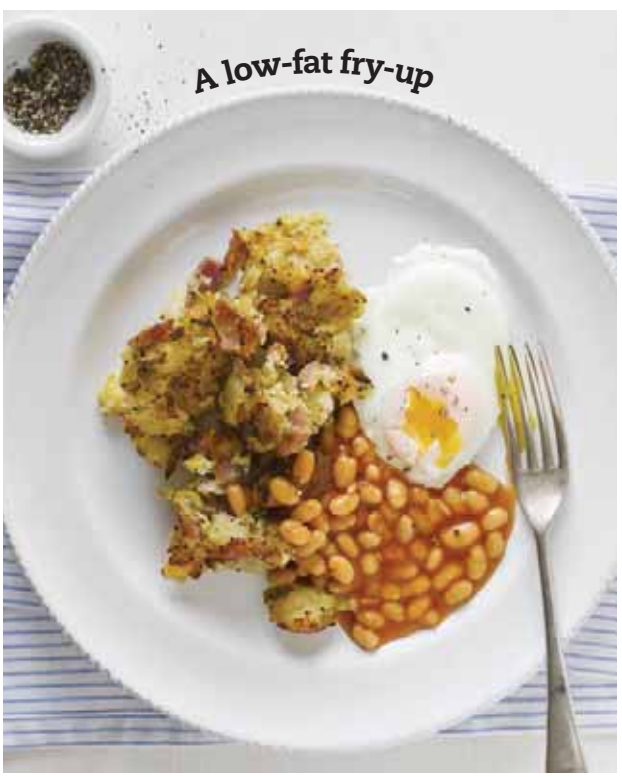


Pulled chicken

SERVES 6 **PREP** 20 mins **COOK** 1 hr 30 mins
EASY LOW CAL FIBRE 2 OF 5 A DAY GOOD 4 YOU chicken only

8 bone-in chicken thighs, skin removed and discarded and trimmed of any big bits of fat
2 tbsp chipotle paste
250ml passata
75g barbecue sauce
1 onion, chopped
Juice of 3 limes, plus extra wedges to serve (optional)
800g canned black beans, drained and rinsed
215g canned refried beans
1 small, ripe avocado, diced
Small handful of coriander leaves
3 Baby Gem lettuces, shredded
8-12 tacos, or cooked rice, to serve

1 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan. Rub the chicken thighs with 1 tbsp of the chipotle paste and some seasoning. Mix the remaining chipotle paste with the passata, barbecue sauce, 100ml water and half the onion. Spoon the sauce into a roasting tin that will fit the chicken snugly in a single layer and add the chicken thighs. Cover tightly with foil and bake for 1 hr, then uncover, increase the oven to 200C/180C fan and bake for another 20 mins.
2 Meanwhile, mix the remaining onion with the lime juice and some salt, and set aside while the chicken cooks. Mix all the beans in a saucepan with 100ml water, ready to heat to serve.
3 When the chicken is really tender, use two forks to shred the meat into the sauce (discard the bones). Keep covered with the foil while you heat the beans for 5-10 mins until piping hot and not too wet, and warm the tacos following pack instructions. Stir the avocado and coriander leaves into the lime-onion mixture.
4 Serve the pulled chicken and beans with shredded lettuce and tacos, or rice and lime wedges to squeeze over, if you like. Top with a spoonful of the avocado salsa.
PER SERVING 353 kcals • protein 29g • carbs 25g • fat 13g • sat fat 3g • fibre 10g • sugar 10g • salt 1.2g



Ham & potato hash with baked beans & healthy 'fried' eggs

SERVES 4 **PREP** 10 mins **COOK** 25-30 mins
EASY LOW FAT LOW CAL FOLATE FIBRE P

600g potatoes, diced
Low-fat cooking spray, for frying
2 leeks, trimmed, washed and sliced
175g lean ham, weighed after trimming and discarding any fat, chopped
2 tbsp wholegrain mustard
5 eggs
830g canned reduced sugar & salt baked beans

1 Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Add the potatoes and boil for 5 mins until just tender. Drain well and leave in the colander to steam-dry.
2 Meanwhile, spray an ovenproof pan with cooking spray. Add the leeks with a splash of water and fry until very soft and squishy. Add a few more sprays of the oil, tip in the potatoes along with the ham, and fry to crisp up a little. Heat oven to 200C/180C fan.
3 Stir in the mustard, 1 egg and a good amount of seasoning with a fork – break up some of the potatoes roughly as you do. Flatten down the mixture, spray the top with oil, and bake in the oven for 15-20 mins until the top is crisp.
4 When the hash is nearly ready, heat 200ml water in a non-stick frying pan with a lid (or use a baking sheet as a lid). When it is steaming (but before it simmers), crack in the remaining 4 eggs and cover with a lid. Cook for 2-4 mins until the eggs are done to your liking. Meanwhile, heat the beans.
5 Lift an egg onto each plate, add a big scoop of hash and spoon on some beans.
PER SERVING 499 kcals • protein 37g • carbs 49g • fat 15g • sat fat 4g • fibre 13g • sugar 10g • salt 3.6g

The heat is on

Chillies can add subtle warmth or a full-on kick to a dish. Here are some interesting ways to use them – seeds in or out is up to you! Recipes JENNIFER JOYCE Photographs PETER CASSIDY

Spaghetti with chilli prawns, salami & gremolata breadcrumbs, recipe p36

Medium



Food styling JENNIFER JOYCE | Styling LUIS PERAL | Wine notes SARAH JANE EVANS MW


Mild
Chilli jam ploughman's,
recipe p36

Cauliflower & tomato curry

Green chillies and tamarind spark up this vegetarian curry. If you're making this midweek, use curry pastes and spice mixtures, like garam masala, but this is one curry that benefits from the fresh chillies and toasted and ground spices.

SERVES 4 **PREP** 20 mins **COOK** 40 mins

EASY V LOW CAL FIBRE VIT C 2 OF 5 A DAY

2 onions, 1 quartered, the other thinly sliced
5cm piece ginger, peeled and sliced
2 green chillies, 1 halved and deseeded, the other sliced
3 garlic cloves, chopped
2 tbsp vegetable oil
½ tsp turmeric
2 tsp black or yellow mustard seeds
10 curry leaves
100ml tamarind purèe
400ml passata
250ml vegetable stock
3 tbsp desiccated coconut
1 cauliflower, about 500g small handful coriander leaves, cooked rice, lime pickle and mango chutney, to serve

FOR THE SPICE MIX

1 tsp each coriander seeds, cumin seeds and fennel seeds
1 long dried red chilli (we used Kashmiri)

1 To make the spice mix, toast the coriander, cumin, and fennel seeds, with the dried chilli for 30 secs, or until you smell them. Grind in a spice grinder until very powdery. Remove and set aside.

2 In a blender or food processor, purée the quartered onion, ginger, halved green chilli and garlic to make a paste. In a large saucepan, heat the oil. Add the sliced onion, paste and season well, then sauté for 12 mins until golden. Add the spice mix, turmeric, curry leaves and mustard seeds and sauté for about 2 mins. Add the tamarind, passata, stock and coconut, and bring to the boil.

3 Cut the cauliflower into medium florets and add to the curry. Lower the heat to a simmer and cook for 25 mins until the cauliflower is tender. Serve with rice, coriander leaves, the remaining sliced green chilli and lime pickle and mango chutney, if you like.

PER SERVING

307 kcals • protein 9g • carbs 30g • fat 15g • sat fat 7g • fibre 8g • sugar 27g • salt 0.2g

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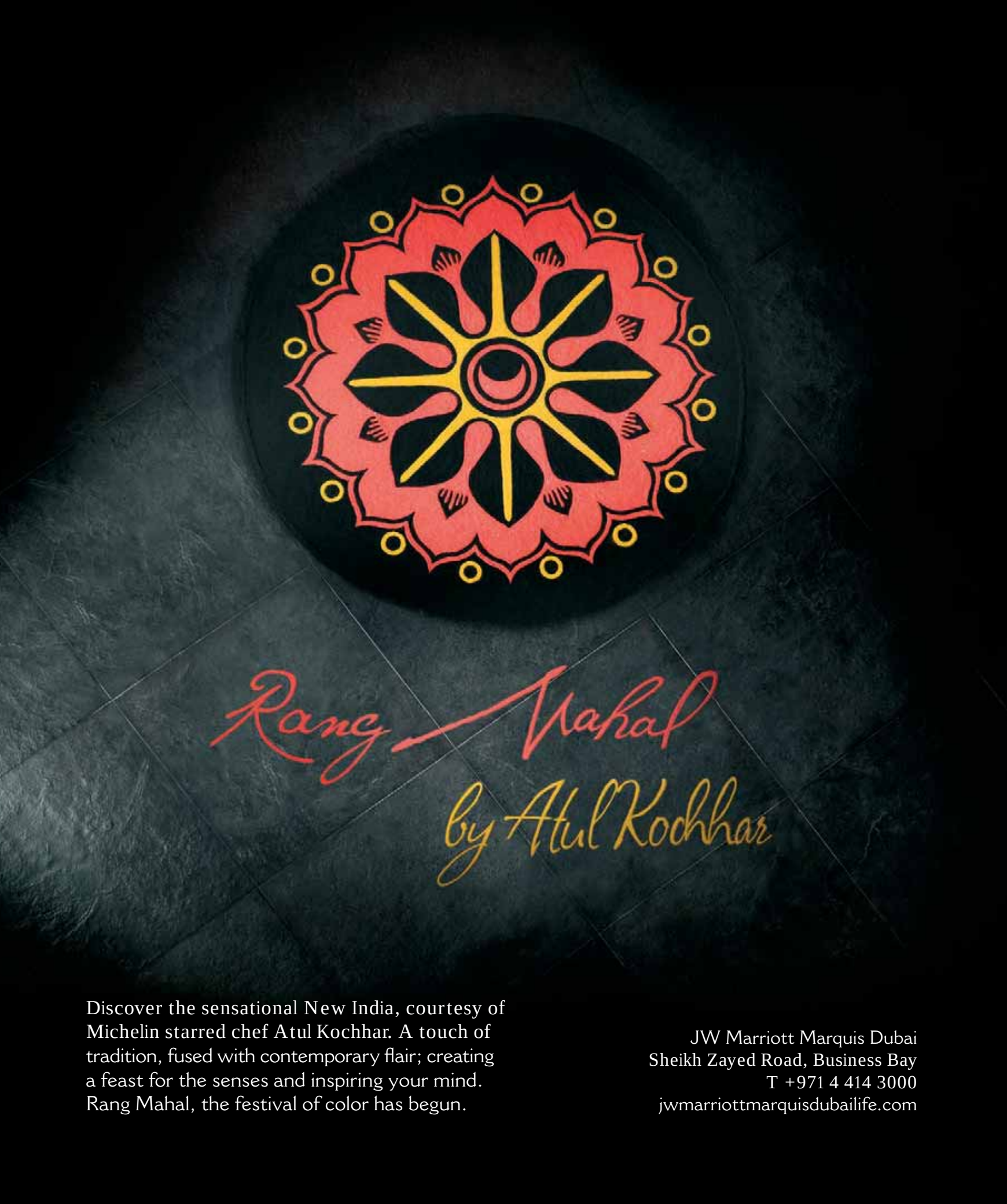
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Medium

A touch of Tex-mex spice adds fire to grilled fish

Fish tacos with green jalapeño salsa & chilli cream

SERVES 4 **PREP** 20 mins plus marinating and soaking skewers **COOK** 10 mins

EASY VIT C 1 OF 5 A DAY

500g swordfish steaks or other firm white fish, cut into 3cm cubes
Zest of 2 limes and juice of 1, plus lime wedges to serve (save the other one for the salsa)
1 tbsp honey
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp each garlic salt, mild chilli powder, ground cumin and sugar
Warmed soft corn tortillas, shredded white cabbage, sliced radishes and chipotle, Tabasco or other hot sauce, to serve

FOR THE SALSA

1 small red onion, finely chopped
Juice of 1 lime
2 small mangoes, diced
1 green jalapeño chilli, finely chopped
¼ tsp ground cumin
Small handful coriander, chopped

FOR THE CHILLI CREAM

100g soured cream
1 tbsp chipotle Tabasco, or other hot pepper sauce

1 In a shallow dish, mix the fish with the lime zest and juice, honey and olive oil. Cover and leave to marinate for 30 mins in the fridge. In a small bowl, mix together the spices and sugar with a little salt. Remove the fish, and skewer it onto wooden or metal skewers. If using wooden skewers, soak them in water for 10 mins first. Dust with the spices and seasoning. Chill until ready to cook.

2 Next, make the salsa. Put the red onion in a bowl, cover with the lime juice and let sit for 5 mins. Add the remaining salsa ingredients and season. In another bowl, mix together the ingredients for the chilli cream and season.

3 Heat the barbecue or griddle. Cook the fish for 2-3 mins each side on direct heat until grill marks appear and it feels firm. Serve the fish with warm corn tortillas, cabbage, radishes, the chilli cream, mango salsa, extra chipotle sauce, Tabasco or other hot sauce and lime wedges for squeezing over.

PER SERVING 299 kcals • protein 25g • carbs 19g • fat 14g • sat fat 5g • fibre 2g • sugar 19g • salt 1.8g



Chocolate with a hint of heat

Mild

Chocolate, mint & chilli truffles

MAKES 25 truffles **PREP** 10 mins plus 2 hrs chilling **COOK** 10 mins EASY

150ml double cream
100g milk chocolate, chopped
100g dark chocolate, chopped
2 tbsp butter
3 tbsp golden syrup
1 tsp mint extract
2 red bird's-eye chillies, roughly chopped
50g blanched almonds, finely chopped and toasted

1 Pour the cream into a pan and heat until just steaming, but not boiling. Put the chopped chocolate and butter in a bowl, pour over the hot cream, and stir until smooth. Add the golden syrup, mint extract and chilli. Chill until firm, about 2 hrs.

2 Using a melon baller roll into 1 tsp balls. Roll the balls in chopped almonds and set on a tray. Cover and chill until serving.

PER TRUFFLE 123 kcals • protein 1g • carbs 6g • fat 10g • sat fat 6g • fibre 1g • sugar 5g • salt 0.1g »

Spaghetti with chilli prawns, salami & gremolata breadcrumbs



When sautéed, red chillies aren't as blazing hot and they make a delicious sauce combined with salami, prawns and cherry tomatoes. The crisp lemon and parsley breadcrumbs top it off for an amazing pasta dish.

SERVES 4 **PREP** 15 mins **COOK** 15 mins EASY P

4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 thumb-sized red chillies, sliced and most seeds removed
3 garlic cloves, chopped
1 tsp fennel seeds
10 slices fennel salami, chopped
140g cherry tomatoes, halved
400g spaghetti or bucatini pasta
300g large raw prawns, shells removed
FOR THE BREADCRUMBS
2 slices crusty bread, pulsed to crumbs
Large handful flat-leaf parsley, chopped
Zest of 1 lemon

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. In a large frying pan, heat 3 tbsp of the oil. Add the chillies and most of the garlic (save 1 tsp for the breadcrumbs) and sauté until golden, about 2-3 mins. Add the fennel seeds and salami, and stir for 1 min. Tip in the tomatoes and a pinch of salt, then sauté for a further 10 mins.
2 Tip the breadcrumbs onto a baking sheet, pour over the remaining oil, season and bake for 7 mins. Toss the remaining garlic through the crumbs and bake for 3 mins more. Remove and add the parsley and lemon zest.
3 Cook the pasta in boiling salted water to packet instructions, about 9 mins. Heat the sauce and just before the pasta is ready, stir in the prawns so that they cook through. Drain the pasta and mix with the sauce, then sprinkle with the crumbs.

PER SERVING 613 kcals • protein 31g • carbs 78g • fat 19g • sat fat 4g • fibre 5g • sugar 5g • salt 1.1g

Chilli jam ploughman's



Use regular 'thumb-sized' red chilli for this spicy tomato chilli jam. As well as sandwiches, try a dollop in stir-fries or fried rice. It's also fabulous with seared fish and grilled steaks.

MAKES 500ml (about 2 small jars) **PREP** 10 mins **COOK** 45 mins EASY V

4 garlic cloves
5 red chillies, deseeded
5cm piece ginger, peeled and roughly chopped
500g ripe tomatoes, quartered
300g soft light brown sugar
150ml cider vinegar
1 tsp each mustard seeds and coriander seeds
Slices of toasted baguette and manchego cheese or firm goat's cheese, to serve

1 Put the garlic, chilli and ginger in a food processor and pulse until blended. Add the tomatoes and pulse until finely chopped. Pour into a saucepan and add the sugar, cider vinegar and the spices. Bring to the boil, then turn down to a simmer. Cook for 45 mins or until thick and syrupy. Pour into sterilised jars with fitted lids. *Will keep chilled for 1 month.*
2 Serve the chilli jam with toasted baguette slices and a sharp firm cheese like Manchego or goat's cheese.

PER TBSP SERVING 29 kcals • protein none • carbs 7g • fat none • sat fat none • fibre none • sugar 7g • salt none

West Indian-style chicken legs with sauce chien

This herby sauce, spiked with fiery Scotch bonnet, originates in Martinique and translates literally as 'dog sauce'. The name was supposedly given because of the sauce's sharp chilli bite – rest assured, no dogs are used in the recipe! Scotch bonnets are traditionally used, and are extremely hot, so feel free to use regular red chillies if you find the heat too intense.

SERVES 6 **PREP** 15 mins plus at least 3 hrs marinating **COOK** 1 hr EASY

6 chicken legs
1 tsp each ground cumin and allspice
½ Scotch bonnet chilli, seeds removed, finely chopped
FOR THE SAUCE CHIEN
Zest and juice 2 limes, plus extra juice (optional)
1 garlic clove
2 shallots, peeled
Large handful flat-leaf parsley
½ Scotch bonnet chilli, seeds removed
3 spring onions, thinly sliced
1 tsp grated ginger
2 tbsp rice wine vinegar
Pinch of sugar
Cooked rice, to serve (we used coconut rice)

1 To make the sauce, place all the ingredients in the small bowl of a food processor, with 2 tbsp boiling water and a pinch of salt. Blend and taste, adding another squeeze of lime juice if needed.
2 Rub the chicken with the spices, chilli and 1 tsp each of salt and pepper. Pour a third of the sauce over and marinate for at least 3 hrs, or overnight.
3 Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan. Transfer the chicken to a roasting tin and roast for 1 hr, or until crisp and the meat pulls away from the bone. Serve the chicken with the remaining sauce and some coconut rice.

PER SERVING 130 kcals • protein 13g • carbs 3g • fat 8g • sat fat 2g • fibre none • sugar 2g • salt 0.9g »



Hot

West Indian-style chicken legs with sauce chien



Espresso, chocolate & chilli cake with coffee cream

SERVES 8-10 **PREP** 20 mins **COOK** 40-45 mins
EASY

3 tbsp plain flour, plus extra for the tin
250g dark chocolate, broken into pieces
250g salted butter, softened and chopped, plus extra for greasing
1 tbsp instant espresso powder
2 red bird's-eye chillies, deseeded and finely chopped
¼ tsp chilli powder (optional)
6 medium eggs, separated
4 tbsp brown sugar
175g caster sugar
½ tsp cream of tartar
4 tbsp ground almonds
Cocoa powder, to serve
FOR THE COFFEE CREAM
300ml double cream
1 tbsp instant espresso powder

1 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan. Grease a 22cm springform cake tin with soft butter and line the bottom with baking parchment. Shake a little flour around the buttered edges.
2 Melt the chocolate and butter together over a pan of simmering water, or in a microwave. Once melted, whisk together until smooth and add the espresso powder, chillies and chilli powder, if using. Whisk the egg yolks with the brown sugar and caster sugar, either in an electric mixer or with an electric hand whisk, for 5-10 mins until thick and pale. In a separate bowl, using a clean whisk, beat the egg whites and cream of tartar until soft rounded peaks form.
3 Pour the chocolate mixture onto the beaten yolks and sugar, and gently mix until smooth. Add the almonds and flour and mix again. Spoon the egg whites into the chocolate mixture and gently fold together. Pour the batter into the prepared tin and bake for 40-45 mins until the cake is set but with a slight jiggle in the centre. (If the cake is starting to brown too quickly, cover with a piece of baking parchment.)
4 Leave to cool in the tin – it will sink a little as it cools. Run a knife around the inside of the cake tin to loosen. Remove the baking parchment and place on a cake stand. Whisk the cream and espresso powder until soft peaks form. Serve on the side or spoon on top of the cake dusted with a little cocoa powder.

PER SERVING (10) (with the coffee cream) 682 kcals • protein 8g • carbs 40g • fat 54g • sat fat 30g • fibre 3g • sugar 32g • salt 0.5g
PER SERVING (10) (without the coffee cream) 532 kcals • protein 8g • carbs 39g • fat 38g • sat fat 20g • fibre 3g • sugar 32g • salt 0.5g GF

CHILLI CHAT

How hot can a chilli be?

The hot sensation in chillies is caused by the chemical compound, capsaicin. The Scoville heat scale uses this chemical to gauge the pungency of chillies. It ranges from zero to 2.2 million.

The hottest chilli in the world is the Carolina Reaper, which hits the very top of the scale. It's followed by the Trinidad Scorpion (1.2-2 million) and the Ghost Pepper from India (800,000-1 million). The seeds and membranes hold over 80 per cent of the heat, so if you remove them, you can greatly reduce their fieriness.

The flavour of chillies differs vastly and is a bit like tasting wine. Hints of tobacco, chocolate or fruit can come through and change again when they're dried.

Which ones to buy

These are some of the common varieties on offer with their Scoville heat scale ratings:



Peppers/pimiento peppers These colourful peppers are the mildest chillies on the heat scale, coming in at zero. Delicious raw, cooked or pickled.



Pepperoncini Mostly sold pickled for kebabs, antipasti or tapas, these long, green skinny peppers have a little bite to them, with a heat rating of 100-500. Use chopped in salads, dips or wraps.



Jalapeño A thumb-sized, mild Mexican green chilli with a thick flesh and rounded edges. Their heat is moderate (2,500-8,000) so they are ideal for fresh salsas, tacos, ceviches, curries or even pickled.



Fresno Green or Red chilli Similar in appearance and heat to Jalapeño, ranging from 2,000-10,000 on the Scoville scale. Grown both in green and red, these are the ubiquitous chillies you'll find in most supermarkets. Their pungent peppery taste works in almost any foods and if you remove the seeds, you can use quite a few.



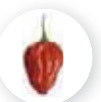
Malagueta Better known as the 'piri piri' chilli in Portugal and Brazil, they are starting to appear on grocery shelves, bottled in oil or brine. Similar looking to Thai bird's-eye chillies, these diminutive chillies pack a good wallop rating at 50,000-100,000. Their fruity flavour is used to make piri piri hot sauce or marinade.



Thai bird's-eye chillies 'The smaller the chilli, the higher the heat' may not always be true, but here it's precisely the case (50,000-100,000). Tiny, but formidable – use them sparingly. Essential for classic Thai dishes like Pad Thai, curries and green papaya salad.



Scotch bonnets These Jamaican 'fire bombs' are guaranteed to make you sweat (100,000-350,000). Their fruity flavour is used in Caribbean, African and West Indian cooking in iconic dishes like jerk chicken and curries. Half is enough to make a dish for four very spicy.



Habañero Tread carefully when using this lantern-shaped chilli which comes in red, green and yellow. It has the same level of heat as the Scotch bonnet, and both are at the top of the scale. Use in ceviches, salsas, chutney and curries.

Chilli photographs ADRIAN TAYLOR

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Cold days, COSY FOOD

Delicious and hearty dishes for the chillier weather, from an on-the-go lunch to a comforting supper and dessert. Photographs DAVID MUNNS



Speedy comfort food

Brie, ham & fig jam toastie

MAKES 1 **PREP** 5 mins **COOK** 5 mins
EASY CALCIUM P

A little butter, softened
2 thick slices good white bread
1 tbsp fig jam
2 tsp Dijon mustard
Few slices Brie or Camembert
1 thick slice of ham (pork or turkey)
Salad leaves, to serve (optional)

1 Heat a toastie maker, or a small griddle pan. Butter each slice of bread on one side, then spread the other side of one slice with fig jam, and one with mustard. Top the fig jam with Brie and ham, sandwich with the remaining bread, butter-side up, then place in the toastie maker or the griddle pan. If cooking in a pan, squash down a little with the back of a fish slice while cooking, flip over after 2-3 mins when golden, then cook on the other side. Serve with a handful of salad leaves on the side, if you like.

PER SANDWICH 473 kcals • protein 24g • carbs 50g • fat 20g • sat fat 11g • fibre 2g • sugar 14g • salt 3.5g >>



Mac 'n' cheese made even better

Cheese & tomato macaroni with chipolatas

SERVES 6 **PREP** 15 mins **COOK** 50 mins
EASY CALCIUM P

12 chipolata sausages (or small chicken sausages)
300g pack semi-dried tomatoes, drained (reserve 1 tbsp oil for the sausages) and roughly chopped
400g macaroni or other small pasta shapes
75g butter
Bunch of spring onions, chopped
75g plain flour
1l semi-skimmed milk
200g extra-mature cheddar, grated
50g Parmesan, grated
6 rosemary sprigs, leaves picked and chopped, plus a few short sprigs to finish
Salad, to serve (optional)

1 Heat oven to 200C/180C fan. Put the chipolatas in a baking dish approx 30 x 25cm (this will hold your pasta later, so make sure it's big enough), drizzle with the tomato oil and cook for 25 mins.
2 Meanwhile, cook the macaroni in a large pan of boiling salted water until tender, then drain. While the pasta cooks, make the sauce. In a large pan, melt the butter, then add the spring onions. Fry for 1-2 mins to soften. Stir in the flour and mix with the butter to make a paste. Continue cooking for 30 secs, then add the milk, a little at a time, stirring continuously, until the sauce is thick and smooth. Add the cheddar and Parmesan (reserving a good handful for the top), half the semi-dried tomatoes, the rosemary, seasoning and macaroni, then stir everything together.
3 Remove the baking dish from the oven, transfer the sausages to a plate and pour away any oil from the dish. Tip in the macaroni, nestle the sausages back in, pushing them in until only half exposed, then sprinkle with the remaining cheese and tomatoes, and push in a few rosemary sprigs. Return to the oven and bake for 25 mins. Serve with a salad, if you like.

PER SERVING 792 kcals • protein 33g • carbs 65g • fat 45g • sat fat 21g • fibre 3g • sugar 16g • salt 2.8g

TIP Keep any leftover oil from the semi-dried tomatoes to use in pasta sauces, salads or for dunking bread.



Cherry Bakewell sponge pudding

SERVES 6-8 **PREP** 20 mins **COOK** 1 hr EASY

850g cans pitted black cherries, in syrup
6 tbsp cherry jam
200g butter, softened
200g golden caster sugar
3 large eggs
50g self-raising flour
140g ground almonds
1 tsp almond extract
50g flaked almonds
Icing sugar, for dusting
Cream or custard, to serve

New twist on a favourite

1 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan. Tip the syrup from the cherries and the jam into a saucepan. Boil for 10-15 mins until the liquid has reduced by half and is thick and syrupy, and add the cherries to the pan. Pour into a baking dish, roughly 18 x 25cm, then set aside.

2 In a large bowl, mix the butter, sugar, eggs, flour, almonds, almond extract and a pinch of salt with an electric whisk until combined. Dollop the sponge mixture over the cherries and spread to a smooth layer, trying not to disturb the cherries underneath too much. Scatter over the flaked almonds, then bake for 45 mins until a skewer inserted into the sponge layer comes out clean. Leave to cool for 5 mins, then dust with icing sugar and serve with cream or, better yet, custard.

PER SERVING (8) 549 kcals, protein 8g, carbs 48g, fat 36g, sat fat 15g, fibre 1g, sugar 43g, salt 0.6g GF



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Kitchen notes

Nutrition advice, cooking tips and product picks for your pantry.



Reader tip of the month

If you don't have a stand mixer or balloon whisk on hand, use a French press to whip cream – all you have to do is pump it up and down several times.

- Sana Cox

Got a great tip you want to share?
Get in touch with us on facebook or twitter

Green bin

Want to go greener in your kitchen? Emerson's InSinkErator, a compact waste disposer that grinds food waste into tiny particles, is the gadget to have for any eco-friendly home. The disposer is fitted under the kitchen sink, allowing all organic rubbish to be flushed down directly into the waste treatment system. The compact bins are bladeless, and work with the touch of a button. flushing all ground waste particles directly to a septic tank, instead of a landfills where harmful methane gas is produced. You can grind everything from chicken bones to egg shells - it's great for those who despise taking out the trash as well! Available in two models, Evolution 200 and Model 65+. From Dhs1,299 at insinkerator.com.



SMART FOOD SWAPS



454 calories
7-8 fried, breaded shrimps (164g)

Swap for



274 calories
2 salmon fish cakes (50g each)

or



125 calories
1 (100g) cooked seabass fillet

or



258 calories
6 roasted chicken wings

Freeze right

Do you find that your food gets thrown in the freezer, or is left unused for a long time? Organise your freezer well, to waste less and help you find what you're looking for. Here are two easy-to-remember tips:

1 Wrap all solid food in plastic wrap, and pour liquids into ziplock bags before freezing – get rid of as much air as possible. Label all packs with the name of the dish and production date, and stack them flat, to save space.



2 Separate large chunks of chicken, so that you don't have bulky items in the freezer. This also helps if you're cooking for a smaller crowd, as it will be hard to tear apart two frozen chicken wings from a tray of six, or from a big bird – without defrosting the whole thing (as we all know that re-freezing is risky).

Health update>

MANAGE STRESS WITH FOOD

Between work, traffic and a million other things, if you, like us, find yourself struggling to cope with stress at times, remember that you can lift your mood by eating right. Try these the next time you feel like ripping your hair out, and find your stress levels dissipate:

- **Sip on a cup of tea, whether it's green, black or chamomile tea – they all contain antioxidants that help suppress anxiety.**
- **Try a berry smoothie with iron-rich greens like spinach or kale. Iron helps combat fatigue, while vitamin C and antioxidants boost immunity.**
- **Tuck into a bowl of oatmeal with honey – the fibre helps maintain blood sugar levels, while the antioxidants in honey builds the immune system. Honey is also an energy-boosting food.**
- **Bite into a square of dark chocolate to increase hormones called endorphins, which are mood-enhancers released into the brain.**

Look what we found! 3 great new products for your kitchen

We're toting around these all-natural and vegan petite Hint Mints in flavours like mint, citrus, chocolate and pomegranate acai, to name a few, in our handbags these days. Dhs5 at WH Smith outlets.



Drizzle this thick aged, reduced Giuseppe Giusti Crema Balsamic Galze on everything from leafy green salads, to scoops of vanilla ice cream. Dhs39 at Market and Platters.



Who says you can't have cheesecake if you're on a free-from diet? Indulge guilt-free in this naturally dairy-and gluten-free Mango Pasho cheesecake, Dhs20 from Coco Yogo at Ripe Market.



Compiled by NICOLA MONTEATH | Photographs SUPPLIED; SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Modern Chinese

Chinese New Year
Feb 19

Inspired by the lesser-known Sichuan region of China, these new recipes are great for sharing with friends. Serve up a contemporary buffet-style feast this Chinese New Year. Recipes JENNIFER JOYCE Photographs DAVID MUNNS

Red braised ginger pork belly with pickled chillies, p48

Smacked cucumber pickles, p49

Food styling JENNIFER JOYCE | Styling SUE ROWLANDS



Salt & pepper prawns, p48

Thin-stemmed broccoli with hoisin sauce & fried shallots, p49

Gunpowder chicken with dried red chillies & peanuts, p49



Salt & pepper prawns

SERVES 6-8 as part of a buffet **PREP** 10 mins
COOK 10 mins EASY

2 tbsp cornflour
Vegetable oil, for deep-frying
24 large king prawns, peeled and deveined, with tails
Pea shoots or baby salad leaves, to serve (optional)
FOR THE SPICE MIX
1 tbsp Sichuan peppercorns
4 black peppercorns
2 tbsp sea salt flakes
Large pinch of chilli flakes
FOR THE DIPPING SAUCE
1 garlic clove, crushed
1 tbsp coriander leaves, chopped
1 small red chilli, finely chopped
2 tbsp caster sugar
Juice of 3 limes
1 tbsp fish sauce

1 First, make the dipping sauce. Crush the garlic, coriander and chilli using a pestle and mortar. (If you don't have one, just finely chop.) Pound in the sugar until dissolved, then add the lime juice and fish sauce. It should taste sweet, salty and spicy.
2 To make the spice mix, toast the Sichuan and black peppercorns in a frying pan over a medium heat for 1 min or until fragrant. Finely grind in a spice mill or using a pestle and mortar, then add the salt and chilli flakes and mix together. Transfer to a bowl.
3 Combine the spice mix with the cornflour. Heat 7.5cm of oil in a large wok or deep heavy-based saucepan. You can test the temperature by frying a small piece of bread – it should sizzle instantly and take 20 secs to turn golden. Toss the prawns with the spice mix, shake off the excess and deep-fry, in batches, for 1-2 mins or until crisp at the edges and starting to curl. Remove with a slotted spoon, drain on a baking tray lined with kitchen paper and keep warm while you cook the remaining prawns. Scatter over the pea shoots or salad leaves, if you like, and serve with the dipping sauce.

PER SERVING (8) 140 kcals • protein 11g • carbs 10g • fat 6g • sat fat 1g • fibre none • sugar 5g • salt 3.5g



Red braised ginger pork belly with pickled chillies

SERVES 6-8 as part of a buffet **PREP** 10 mins plus marinating **COOK** 2 hrs 15 mins EASY P

2.5kg pork belly, rind removed, cut into 5cm pieces
1 tbsp dark soy sauce
200ml Shaohsing rice wine
2 tbsp vegetable oil
2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
Thumb-sized piece of ginger, cut into matchsticks
Pinch of chilli flakes
100ml Chinese black vinegar
140g soft brown sugar
700ml vegetable stock
TO SERVE
Toasted sesame seeds
Sliced spring onions
2 red chillies, sliced and soaked in rice wine vinegar for 1 hr, then drained
Steamed white rice

1 Toss the pork with the soy and 1 tbsp of the rice wine. Leave for 1 hr or, even better, overnight in the fridge.
2 Heat some of the oil in a medium heavy-based saucepan. Brown the meat, in batches, on both sides and set aside. Add a little more oil and cook the garlic, ginger and chilli for 2-3 mins until golden.
3 Pour the vinegar, remaining rice wine, sugar and stock into the pan and bring to the boil. Add the pork, then turn down the heat, cover and simmer for 2 hrs or until the meat is tender. For the final 30 mins, remove the lid, increase the heat and let the liquid reduce until thick and syrupy. Serve scattered with the sesame seeds, spring onions and sliced chillies, with rice.

PER SERVING (8) 695 kcals • protein 52g • carbs 20g • fat 46g • sat fat 15g • fibre 1g • sugar 19g • salt 1.6g



Gunpowder chicken with dried red chillies & peanuts

SERVES 6-8 as part of a buffet
PREP 15 mins plus marinating **COOK** 10 mins
EASY

12 boneless, skinless chicken thighs (about 900g), cut into pieces
1 tbsp dark soy sauce
2 tbsp vegetable oil
15 whole dried bird's-eye chillies
1 tsp Sichuan peppercorns, ground
bunch spring onions, cut into 2.5cm pieces
50g whole roasted peanuts
FOR THE SAUCE
5 tbsp dark soy sauce
2 tbsp Shaohsing rice wine
4 tbsp Chinese black vinegar
4 tbsp chicken stock
1 tbsp caster sugar
1 tbsp cornflour, mixed into 1 tbsp water

1 Marinate the chicken with the soy and leave to sit for 1 hr. If you don't have time to marinate, don't worry – but it does add extra flavour. Mix the sauce ingredients in a small bowl and set aside.
2 Using a wok and a small amount of the oil, sear the chicken in batches. When it's all browned, remove from the pan and set aside. Snip the stems from the chillies and shake out the seeds. Add the remaining oil and cook the chillies for 1 min, shaking the pan constantly to prevent them burning. Add the chicken back in with the peppercorns, spring onions and peanuts, then stir-fry for 1 min more. Add the sauce and stir for a few mins more until thickened.
PER SERVING (8) 306 kcals • protein 29g • carbs 9g • fat 17g • sat fat 4g • fibre 1g • sugar 4g • salt 2.7g

Smacked cucumber pickles



SERVES 8 **PREP** 10 mins
NO COOK
EASY V LOW FAT GOOD 4 YOU

2 large cucumbers, about 450g, ends trimmed
1 tbsp finely chopped garlic
2 tbsp caster sugar
1 tbsp light soy sauce
2 tbsp Chinese black or rice wine vinegar
2 tbsp chilli oil

Take a rolling pin or cleaver and smack the cucumbers so that they split, then chop into 2.5cm pieces. Put in a bowl with all the remaining ingredients and 1 tsp salt, and toss together. Serve alongside any of the other dishes.
PER SERVING 52 kcals • protein 1g • carbs 6g • fat 3g • sat fat none • fibre 1g • sugar 6g • salt 0.3g

Thin-stemmed broccoli with hoisin sauce & fried shallots



SERVES 8 **PREP** 5 mins
COOK 15 mins
EASY V LOW FAT VIT C GOOD 4 YOU

Vegetable oil, for shallow-frying
4 shallots, thinly sliced
1 garlic clove, thinly sliced
500g thin-stemmed broccoli
4 tbsp hoisin sauce

1 Heat 2.5cm of oil in a small saucepan until a small piece of bread sizzles. Add the shallots and garlic, and fry for about 2 mins or until golden. Drain on kitchen paper and sprinkle with salt.
2 Bring a large pan of water to the boil. Add the broccoli and blanch for 5-10 mins until just cooked, then drain. Serve immediately on a large platter drizzled with the hoisin sauce and sprinkled with the fried garlic and shallots.
PER SERVING 35 kcals • protein 3g • carbs 3g • fat 1g • sat fat none • fibre 2g • sugar 1g • salt 0.9g >>



Make-ahead dessert

Green tea frozen yogurt with sesame brittle shards

Frozen yogurt is a snap to make at home and much healthier than ice cream. Matcha green tea powder can be found at good tea shops or healthfood stores.

SERVES 8 **PREP** 10 mins plus chilling and freezing **COOK** 5 mins EASY LOW FAT

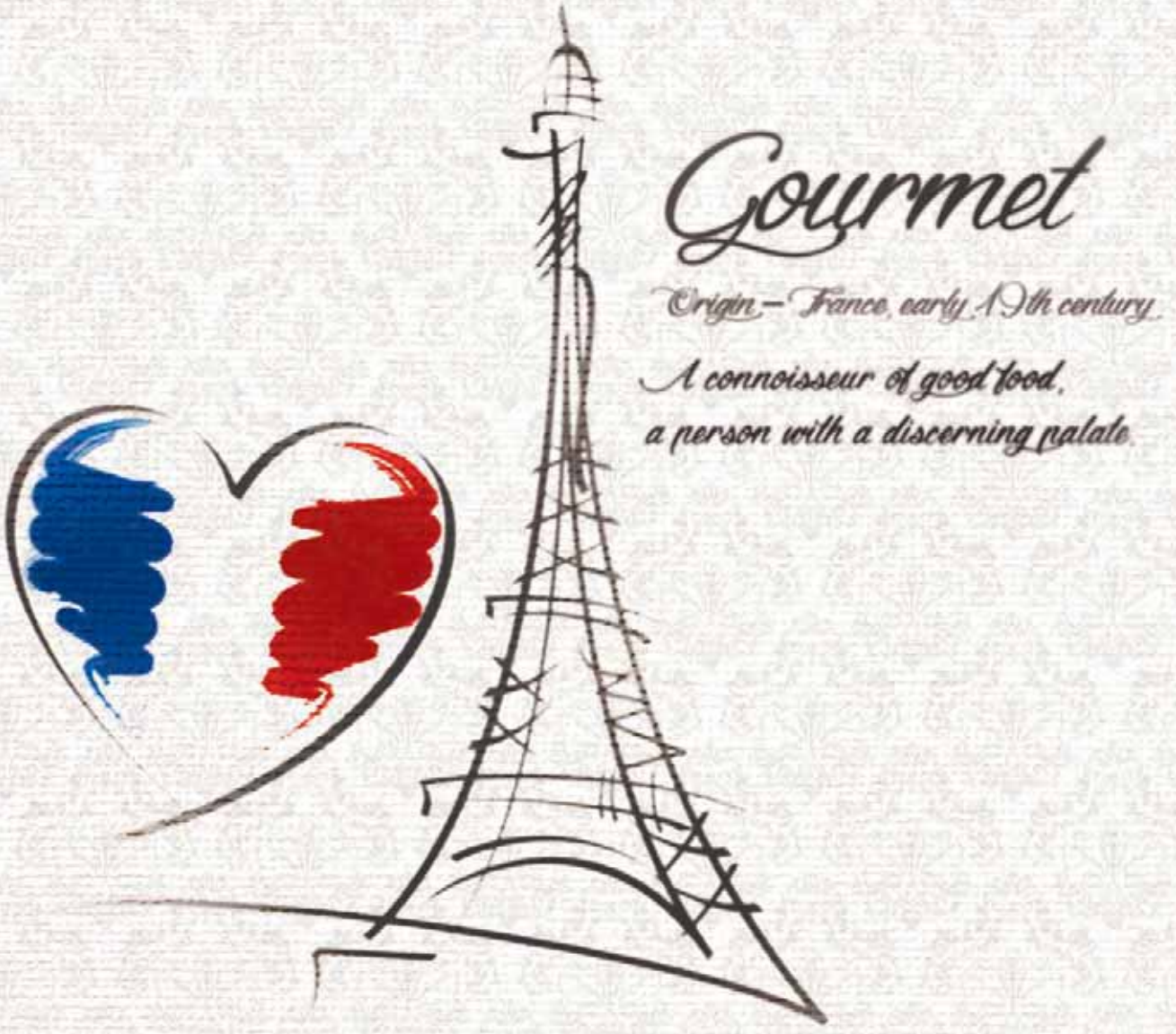
2 x 500g pots 2% Greek yogurt
200g caster sugar
2 tbsp matcha green tea powder
FOR THE SESAME BRITTLE
200g caster sugar
4 tbsp toasted sesame seeds

1 In a large mixing bowl, whisk the yogurt, sugar and matcha powder well until the sugar is dissolved. Cover and chill for 1 hr or until the mixture is very cold. Pour into an ice-cream machine following the manufacturer's instructions. Scrape into a freezable container and freeze for 4-5 hrs until firm.

2 To make the sesame brittle, line a baking sheet with baking parchment. Heat the sugar in a medium saucepan. Leave to melt, without stirring, for about 5 mins until bubbling and golden. Stir the sesame seeds into the light caramel, boil for a few secs, then pour the mix onto the baking sheet, spreading as thin as possible. Once hardened, bash the brittle on the counter to crack into pieces. *Can be made 1 week in advance and stored in an airtight tin.*

3 Remove the frozen yogurt from the freezer 1 hr or so before serving, to soften slightly. Spoon into small bowls with the sesame brittle scattered over.

PER SERVING 333 kcals • protein 14g • carbs 54g • fat 7g • sat fat 2g • fibre 1g • sugar 53g • salt 0.1g 3+



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A CHAMPION'S BREAKFAST

The cricket World Cup is just around the corner! Get into the sporting spirit by trying out these power breakfast ideas to represent the cuisines of the top teams, conjured up by chef Patrick Van Velzen, from international restaurant Latest Recipe at Le Meridien Abu Dhabi.

Photographs ANAS CHERUR



Corn fritters, recipe p53

Text and styling NICOLA MONTEATH | Props from Crate & Barrel



Dutch national Patrick Van Velzen began his culinary career as a commis chef in his native Holland, but put a pause to it, to complete his military service, before getting back into the business, working in restaurants in Amsterdam and Greece over the last 20 years. Patrick also worked as a food stylist, and made appearances on Greek TV shows, alongside working with Sheraton Resorts in Greece, before moving to Abu Dhabi to become Executive Chef at the Le Meridien hotel in 2012.

NEW ZEALAND

Corn fritters

SERVES 4 **PREP** 15 mins **COOK** 10 mins EASY

250g canned baby corn
1 egg
30g self-raising flour
80ml water
A pinch of salt
260ml oil, for frying
Small handful of parsley, chopped (optional)

1 Mix together the egg, flour, water and salt, until you get a smooth texture. Add the corn to this, and mix again.
2 Heat the oil, and pour 2 tbsp. into a pan. Fry until golden brown and place on paper towels to drain the oil. Serve with the chopped parsley, if you like, and your favourite dipping sauce.
PER SERVING 420 kcals • protein 4.3g • carbs 17.7g • fat 40g • sat fat 5.6g • fibre 2g • sugar 2g • salt 0.4g

SRI LANKA

Egg hoppers

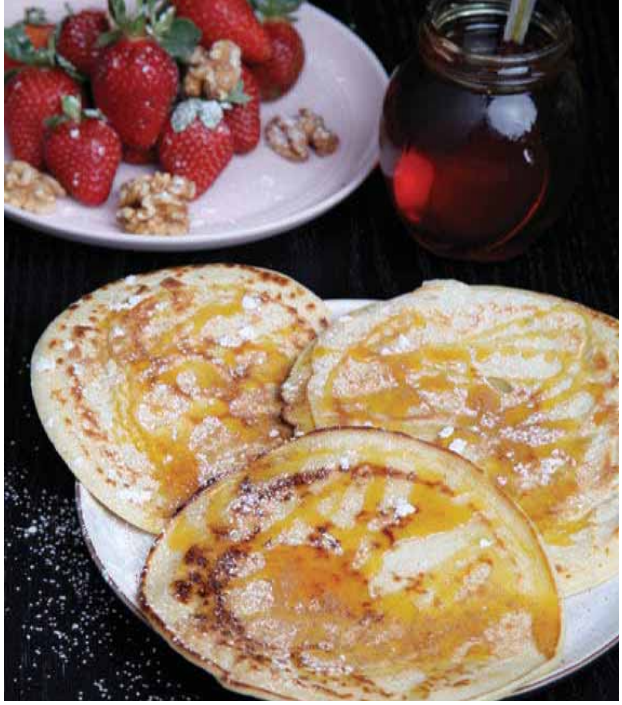
SERVES 4 **PREP** 45 mins **COOK** 15 mins EASY

1 tsp active dry yeast
150ml water
270g rice flour
1 tsp sugar
250ml coconut milk
¼ tsp baking soda
Canola oil, for greasing the pan
4 eggs
FOR THE ONION SAMBOL
1 tbsp dried Maldive fish chips or coarsely chopped dried shrimp
3 dried chiles de abol, stem removed (red chillies, available at Spinneys)
1 medium yellow onion, chopped
Juice of 1 lime
1 tsp kosher salt, plus more to taste

1 Make the sambol by puréeing the dried fish, chillies, onion, lime juice, and salt, to make a smooth paste. Transfer to a bowl and refrigerate until ready to serve.
2 Combine yeast with water heated to 115C in a bowl. Set aside until foamy, about 8-10 mins. Combine 1 tsp. salt, flour, and sugar in a bowl; add yeast mixture and stir into a batter. Cover, and set aside for 2 hrs. Add the coconut milk and baking soda; stir until smooth. Chill the batter for 1 hr.
3 Heat an 8 inch nonstick skillet over high heat and grease lightly with oil. Add 40ml batter, and swirl around to cover the surface. Cook until the batter begins to set, about 1 min. Cover, and cook until set and the edges are crispy, about 2 mins. Crack the egg into the centre and cover to cook for 3 mins. Remove the hopper from the pan, and serve with the sambol, and any other chutneys on the side.
PER SERVING 755 kcals • protein 14.3g • carbs 65g • fat 48g • sat fat 28g • fibre 2.3g • sugar 5.6g • salt 1.7g »







INDIA

Idli (Rice cake) with coconut chutney

SERVES 4 **PREP** 45 mins **COOK** 20 mins EASY

80g urad dal (split black lentils)
15g rice
½ tsp fenugreek seeds
Salt, to taste
20ml coconut oil
FOR THE COCONUT CHUTNEY
4 whole dry chillies
10g chana dal
1 tsp ginger
1 green chilly
1 tbsp mustard seeds
200g fresh grated coconut
Curry leaves, for garnish
25ml milk
Salt, to taste
YOU WILL NEED
1 idli steamer or dim sum bamboo basket with coconut leaf

1 To make the chutney, sauté the chana dal, ginger, and green chilli until it becomes brown. Set aside until cool, and blend with grated coconut and milk. Sauté the mustard seeds, and curry leaves, and add it to the mixture. Season and set aside.
2 Soak the split black lentils and fenugreek seeds in water for 4 hrs. Soak the rice in water overnight.
3 Blend the split black lentils and fenugreek seeds, gradually adding water, until smooth.
4 Blend the soaked rice until it becomes a paste. Combine the split black lentil paste and rice, season and set aside for 2 hrs.
5 Grease the idli steamer, if you have one, and fill each mould with the batter. Or, spoon large tablespoons of batter on a coconut leaf in the steamer basket, keeping space between each. Level the cake pieces and steam for 10 mins. Serve with coconut chutney on the side.

PER SERVING 246kcals • protein 3.7g • carbs 11.8g • fat 22g • sat fat 4.4g • fibre 6.1g • sugar 3.8g • salt 1g

SOUTH AFRICA

Pannekoek (Dutch pancakes)

MAKES 24 **PREP** 10 mins **COOK** 10 mins

180g cups all-purpose flour
3 eggs
40ml olive oil
25ml white vinegar
A pinch of salt
15g baking powder
350ml milk
20g sugar
Icing sugar, to garnish
Cinnamon, to garnish

1 Beat together the eggs and milk. Add in the olive oil, white vinegar, and salt. Mix well to combine.
2 Sift the flour into this mixture, and add sugar. Beat until smooth, and add the baking powder before mixing thoroughly. The batter consistency should be liquid but not watery. Leave to sit for 1 to 2 hrs.
3 Heat a lightly oiled non-stick pan over medium heat.
4 Scoop about 40ml batter in the centre of the pan and swivel around to coat it with the batter. Cook until bubbles appear on the surface and flip with a spatula to cook until browned on both sides.
5 Serve with icing sugar and cinnamon, maple syrup or honey, and fresh berries.

PER PIECE 61 kcals • protein 2g • carbs 8g • fat 2.7g • sat fat 0.7g • fibre 0.25g • sugar 0.8g • salt 0.2g

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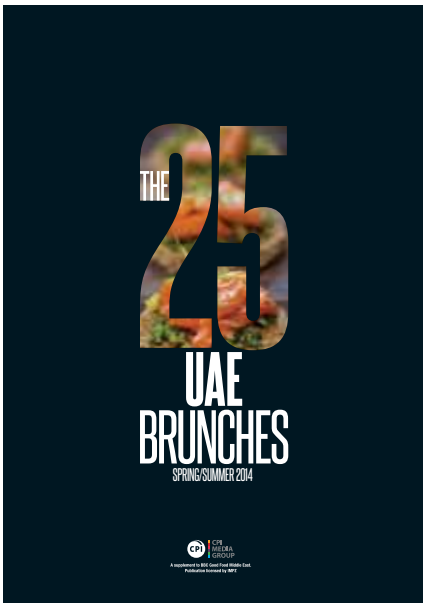
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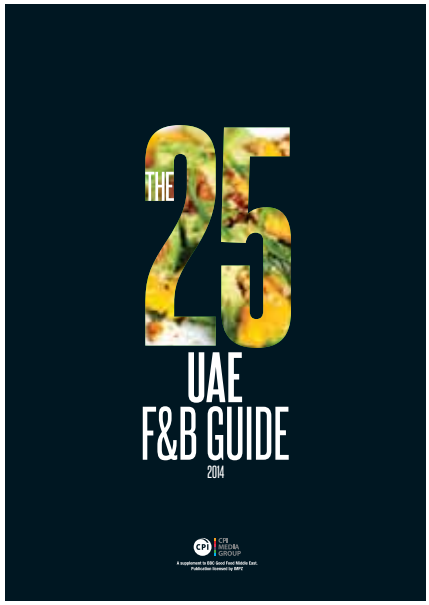


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AUSTRALIA

Breakfast pizza

MAKES 4 pizzas **PREP** 1 hr 10mins **COOK** 15 mins

300g flour
295ml water
20g dry yeast
20g sugar
100ml olive oil
30g salt
FOR THE TOPPING
80g cooked chicken, sliced
50ml fresh tomato sauce
30g mushrooms
3 basil leaves
4 whole eggs

1 Mix the flour, sugar, and yeast with water to make a dough. Add the olive oil and salt, and knead until you get a smooth and elastic consistency. Leave the dough to rest for 1 hr. Stretch the dough out in a pizza pan and spread the tomato sauce on top. Top with the mushrooms, basil, and chickens slices.
2 Bake in a preheated oven at 180C for 20 mins. Add an egg to the centre of the pizza, and bake for 2 more mins, the yolk should be slightly runny.

PER SERVING 600kcals • protein 22g • carbs 66g • fat 29.4g • sat fat 5g • fibre 3.7g • sugar 1.3g • salt 7.5g

ENGLAND

Breakfast scones with tomato chutney

SERVES 4 **PREP** 20 mins **COOK** 25 mins

320g white flour
1 tbsp baking powder
½ tsp salt
8 tbsp unsalted butter
20g sugar
60ml milk
1 tsp cinnamon
A pinch of icing sugar, for decoration
FOR THE TOMATO CHUTNEY
2 fresh tomatoes, chopped
20g onions, chopped
30g red curry paste
10g white vinegar
Clotted cream, to serve

1 Preheat oven to 220C.
2 Mix the flour with the baking powder and salt. Add the butter and mix well. Follow this with the sugar, and the milk, and mix well to form a dough.
3 Divide the dough into small balls and mould by hand to make scone shapes. Place the balls on a cookie sheet and bake for about 10 mins.
4 Sauté the garlic and onion on low heat, and add in the rest of the chutney ingredients. Cook for about 5 mins, mix well, and set aside to cool. Serve the warm scones with the chutney and clotted cream.

PER SERVING 524 kcals • protein 9.3g • carbs 71.8g • fat 24g • sat fat 15g • fibre 4g • sugar 2.5g • salt 1.4g

Dinner date

Valentine's Day February 14

Treat someone special to a fabulous home-cooked meal on Valentine's Day. With this speedy starter, prepare-ahead main and dessert, you'll have a decadent dinner on the table without breaking a sweat. All your Valentine has to do is pour the drinks and relax! Photographs DAVID MUNNS



Bloody Mary pepper prawns

Food styling KATY GREENWOOD | Styling VICTORIA ALLEN



Bloody Mary pepper prawns

SERVES 2 **PREP** 10 mins **COOK** 10 mins EASY

3 tbsp olive oil
1 shallot, finely chopped
1 fat garlic clove, thinly sliced
½ tsp celery seeds
14-16 large raw king prawns, heads removed but tail left on, deveined
2 tsp cornflour
¼ tsp each cayenne pepper and black pepper
50ml vodka
100ml passata
3 tbsp tomato ketchup
Few shakes of Tabasco, depending on how hot you like it
Celery sticks and good crusty bread, to serve

1 Heat the oil in a large frying pan or wok. Add the shallot and fry for 1-2 mins until softened. Add the garlic and celery seeds, and sizzle for 1 min more, then turn the heat up to high. Toss the prawns with the cornflour, cayenne and black pepper. Add to the pan and stir-fry for 1 min until turning pink, then add the vodka (stand back as it may catch fire) and bubble until most of the liquid has evaporated.
2 Add the passata, ketchup, Tabasco and a good pinch of salt. Give everything a stir and cook for 1 min more, then transfer to a serving dish. Scatter with celery leaves and place in the centre of the table with celery sticks and chunks of bread for mopping up the sauce.

PER SERVING 357 kcals • protein 23g • carbs 13g • fat 18g • sat fat 3g • fibre 1g • sugar 8g • salt 1.6g

TIP To make a non-alcoholic version of the prawns, substitute vodka with a mixture of white grape juice or apple cider with lime juice. You could also just use water, but it won't have the same flavour punch.

Stout-braised steak with stacked chips

SERVES 2 **PREP** 20 mins **COOK** 3 hrs 15 mins
A LITTLE EFFORT FOLATE FIBRE VIT C IRON

2 x 250g steaks of beef shin
4 tsp olive oil
500ml bottle of Guinness or other stout
1 beef stock cube, crumbled
2 tbsp each Worcestershire sauce and brown sauce
3 bay leaves
4 shallots, 3 halved with their skin still on, 1 chopped as finely as you can
1 tsp grated horseradish, or 2 tsp creamed
1 tbsp white wine vinegar
2 handfuls watercress
FOR THE CHIPS
600g large baking potatoes
1 tbsp fine polenta or plain flour
1 tbsp sunflower oil

1 Heat oven to 180C/160C fan. Season the steaks well on all sides, then heat a frying pan with 2 tsp of the oil. Brown the steaks well on all sides, then transfer to a snug casserole or narrow, deep baking dish.
2 Tip the Guinness into the frying pan and bring to a simmer, scraping up any stuck meaty bits. Pour over the steaks along with the stock cube, Worcestershire sauce, brown sauce, bay and skin-on halved shallots (leave the skins on to save time – they are removed from the sauce later). Cover the dish tightly with foil first, then add the lid (or a flat baking tray). Bake in the oven for 3 hrs until the meat is meltingly tender. Can be done up to 1 day in advance, then cooled and chilled.
3 For the chips, 1 hr before serving, turn up oven to 200C/180C fan. Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil while you cut the potatoes into as many 3cm fat chips (save the trimmings in a bowl of water and use for mash another night). Par-boil for 3 mins, then drain and let steam-dry for a few mins. Tip onto a baking tray, toss with the polenta or flour and some sea salt, then drizzle over the oil and toss again. Roast for 45 mins until really crisp and golden.
4 When the chips have 20 mins left, lift your steaks from their cooking liquid and use a few sheets of baking parchment to wrap them in a parcel, followed by foil. Put on a low shelf in the oven to heat through for 20 mins. Meanwhile, strain the cooking liquid into a pan, discarding the herbs and shallots. Boil fiercely until reduced by three-quarters. Taste for seasoning, then keep warm.
5 Whisk the chopped shallot, horseradish, remaining 2 tsp oil, vinegar and 1 tsp water with some seasoning, then use to dress the watercress.
6 To serve, carefully open the meat parcel over your saucepan to catch any juices, and add your beef to the sauce to coat. Stack your chips between 2 plates and add a pile of dressed watercress. Lift a steak onto each plate and spoon over the syrupy juices. Any extra can be served in a jug on the side.

PER SERVING 885 kcals • protein 63g • carbs 66g • fat 36g • sat fat 11g • fibre 7g • sugar 9g • salt 2.5g >>

Violet creams

SERVES 2 **PREP** 15 mins plus overnight setting
COOK 10 mins EASY

2 gelatine leaves
150ml double cream
150ml milk
100g golden caster sugar
½ tsp violet essence (available from chezcharles.ae)
Violet and pink food colourings (optional, but nice)
85g dark chocolate
Crystallised roses and violets (available from chezcharles.ae)
Shortbread, to serve

1 Soak the gelatine in a bowl of cold water and set aside. Bring the cream, milk and sugar to the boil. Stir to dissolve the sugar, then take off the heat and add the violet essence – if you want to colour the creams, add the colourings, a tiny drop at a time, until it is as violet as you would like it. Gently squeeze the excess water from the gelatine, then stir it into the hot cream until completely dissolved. Pour into 2 glasses – martini glasses or Champagne coupes look nice – and leave to set in the fridge overnight.

2 The next day, gently melt the chocolate over a pan of simmering water, or in the microwave. Leave to cool a little, then gently zigzag over the top of the set cream mixture in the glasses. Return to the fridge for the chocolate to set.

3 To serve, sprinkle with the crystallised roses and violets. Serve with the shortbread on the side.

PER SERVING 839 kcals • protein 8g • carbs 81g • fat 55g • sat fat 34g • fibre 2g • sugar 80g • salt 0.3g

Elegant dessert to finish



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Baked with love

Slice into this lovely loaf cake to reveal a secret centre! Recipe STEFFI DELLNER Photograph ROB STREETER

Treat for Valentine's Day

Hidden heart cake

CUTS INTO 8-10 slices **PREP** 50 mins **COOK** 2 hrs 20 mins plus cooling A LITTLE EFFORT ❄ un-iced

FOR THE CAKE
2 x 175g unsalted butter, softened
2 x 175g golden caster sugar
6 large eggs
2 x 140g self-raising flour, sifted
2 x ½ tsp baking powder
3 tbsp cocoa powder
2 x 85g ground almonds
2 x 100ml milk
3 tsp vanilla extract
28ml red food colouring or ½ tsp red food colouring gel
FOR THE ICING
100ml double cream
200g dark chocolate, finely chopped
50g unsalted butter
Pink sprinkles (optional)

1 Heat oven to 160C/140C fan. Grease a 900g loaf tin and line with a long strip of baking parchment. Cream 175g butter and 175g sugar until light and fluffy. Beat 3 of the eggs and pour in, a little at a time, mixing after each addition. Sift together 140g flour, **½** tsp baking powder and the cocoa, then fold into the butter mixture along with the almonds. Combine 100ml milk, **1½** tsp vanilla and all the food colouring and add to the batter, then mix until evenly coloured.

2 Pour into the prepared loaf tin and bake for 1 hr 10 mins until a skewer comes out clean. Cool for 10 mins in the tin, then transfer to a wire rack. When cool, cut the cake into 4cm slices. Using a 2cm cutter, stamp out the hearts (save any remaining cake for another treat).

3 Repeat step 1 to make a second cake mixture – you won't have cocoa or food colour in this batch. Pour **¾** of the mixture into the prepared loaf tin. Push the bottoms of the hearts into the batter in a tightly packed row. Spoon over the remaining cake mixture, covering as much of the hearts as possible. Bake for 1 hr or until a skewer comes out clean. Cool for 10 mins in the tin, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.

4 For the icing, gently heat all the ingredients over a low heat until combined. Leave to cool, then chill until needed. Spread over the cooled cake and decorate with the sprinkles, if using. *Will keep for 3 days stored in a cake tin.*

PER SLICE (10) 858 kcals • protein 13g • carbs 65g • fat 60g • sat fat 31g • fibre 4g • sugar 42g • salt 0.6g GI



Food styling ANGELA BOGGIANO | Styling REBECCA NEWPORT

Chef skills

Learn to: Make éclairs



This delicious French pastry technique is surprisingly easy to master. Bertrand Espouy, Executive Chef of newly opened éclair boutique named, what else, Eclair, shows us how it's done. Photographs ANAS CHERUR

Parisian chef Bertrand Espouy has a colourful background, having previously worked as an actor and artist, before entering the culinary field at the age of 40 with a catering business in Sudan. He has since worked in Scotland, at a luxury hotel as well as at his own bakery, and Bahrain, where he worked in a French restaurant. He moved to Dubai in 2014 to join Eclair, an éclair boutique in Jumeirah Lakes Towers.

Text and styling NICOLA MONTEATH

Bitter almond and orange éclair

SERVES 4 (makes 20 pcs) **PREP** 15 mins
COOK 40 mins **A LITTLE EFFORT**

1 tsp salt
1 1/2 tsp sugar
5 large eggs
120g butter, cut into small pieces
320ml water
10g milk powder
160g plain flour
A handful of cranberries, for garnish
Chocolate thins, for garnish
FOR THE FILLING
500g almond paste
150g whipping cream
90g candied orange peel, chopped
2 drops of bitter almond extract
1/4 tsp orange colour flavouring
FOR THE CANDIED ORANGE PEEL
3 oranges
1 tbsp glucose syrup
50ml water
FOR THE ICING
150g white pastry fondant
15ml water

1 Preheat oven to 180C.
2 Sift the flour and milk powder together (Step 1), and in another bowl, whisk the eggs.
3 In a large saucepan, heat the salt, sugar, butter, and water on low heat until the butter has melted. Bring to the boil and immediately pour the flour in. Remove from the heat, and with a spatula, stir quickly until the mix is homogenous (Step 2). Put back on the heat and stir a little more to dry out the pastry.
4 Transfer the hot pastry to a mixer bowl (Step 3) and stir with the paddle attachment on low speed for a couple of mins to let the steam evaporate. Add the whisked eggs gradually (Step 4), and mix well into the pastry dough until it is shiny.
5 Give the dough a final stir with a spatula and put into a pastry bag fitted with a fluted nozzle (Step 5).
6 Pipe the éclairs on trays brushed with vegetable oil (Step 6). Bake at 170C for 40mins. Set aside to cool.
7 Blend together the filling ingredients until smooth.
8 Extract the juice of the 3 oranges, and pour into a small saucepan with the rinsed peel. Add the water and glucose syrup. Bring to a boil and simmer till the mixture becomes almost dry – around 30 mins. Set aside to cool, and chop into thin pieces.
9 Line up baked éclairs on a tray, with the flat bottoms facing up. Using a small paring knife, make three small holes in the bottom, one on each side and one in the middle of the top side, keeping in mind not to make the holes too big or to penetrate the éclair.
10 Place the filling in a piping bag. Cut the tip of the piping bag to fit the size of the éclair holes, and pipe the filling into the holes.
11 Melt the white pastry fondant and soften, if necessary, with water. Place on top of the éclair and decorate with berries and chocolate.

PER PIECE 160 kcals • protein 2.7g • carbs 17g • fat 9g • sat fat 5.4g • fibre 0.7g • sugar 8.3g • salt 0.26g



Combine the flour and milk powder by sifting both of it together.



Mix the wet and dry ingredients with a spatula until it becomes a dough.



Transfer to a mixer bowl and stir with a paddle attachment on low speed.



Whisk the eggs and add it to the mixed dough.



Transfer the dough ingredients into a piping bag.



Line the éclairs on a greased sheet, leaving about 2cm space in between each. Bake and set aside to cool. GF



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IN THIS SECTION

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The story of chocolate

Nicola Monteath delves into chocolate manufacturing, to find out how everyone's favourite indulgence gets created.

Chocolate rivers and caramel oozing from a conveyor belt into pretty little tins, that's what we were expecting to see at the chocolate factories we visited. But what we saw was not quite as glamorous as Willy Wonka's factory! Yet, learning about the process from start to finish, and seeing it first hand was quite fascinating – even if it wasn't the way we imagined it to be.

To explore the process of chocolate manufacturing, we visited gourmet, handmade chocolate maker Delice, the Mars GCC factory in UAE – which produces Galaxy, Snickers, and Mars bars, to sell to over 30 global markets – as well as The Chocolate Academy, a new confectionary training centre in Dubai (located in Business Bay), part of the Barry Callebaut group, a leading Zurich-based chocolatier that owns Belgian chocolate brand, Callebaut.


Finishing touches such as flavoured toppings make each chocolate piece unique


Enrobing is an essential process for chococlates with fillings


Chocolate shapes are created by hand in smaller chocolatier outfits

BEAN BASICS

The first, most obvious thing we found out is that the chocolate recipe varies, but the foundation of the entire process is more or less the same. It all begins with sourcing of cocoa beans. "About 60-70 per cent of global cocoa production takes place in Western Africa," says Frederic Trombert, from Barry Callebaut group. This is because countries like Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Ghana experience rainfall that drains well in the soil, and have a certain amount of humidity, making the climatic conditions favourable for cocoa bean production. Callebaut sources its beans from these countries as well. "To get high quality chocolate, it's important to source the best cocoa beans," says Frederic. Most big factories, like Callebaut and Mars, have their own production plant where the beans are dried, fermented, and roasted – the process is similar to coffee roasting – after the flavours of the beans have been picked; they can range from fruity to acidic. After roasting, they are ground to make chocolate mass, to be shipped out to chocolate manufacturers worldwide.

ALL ABOUT THE BLEND

Chocolate mass is pure cocoa in a block or powder form, which is then 'conched' to make the chocolate mix. "Conching is chocolate mass mixed with sugar and milk for hours, to remove the acidity and combine all the flavours together to make it one," says Frederic. The Master Concher at Callebaut is responsible for this, whereas at Mars, it's all done in a large mixing machine which resembles a massive stainless steel pot. Even if it is automated, the human interaction during the production process is vital, to get the right consistency. "There's a great difference in the quality of chocolate creations, when there's input from humans at some point during the process," says the chief executive and founder of Delice, Jalel Ghayaza.

TIME TO TEMPER

Once the chocolate is conched and ready, it is then tempered. Brands like Delice melt readymade chocolate buttons, instead of mass, to prepare their chocolates. However, the tempering process is common across all chocolate factories big or small. Tempering involves heating, cooling down, and reheating the chocolate at various degrees, and the process can take anywhere from minutes to hours. "Tempering gives a shiny surface and holds the cocoa butter in," says Jalal. Frederic adds that tempering helps the chocolate get that perfect snap when you break it. Once the chocolate is tempered, it is then poured into moulds and cooled down.

Many chocolatiers replace cocoa butter with a chocolate compound batter (vegetable fat) to quicken the tempering process. "This is an affordable, quick route that's common among commercially-produced mass market brands, but it affects the end result of the chocolate. Cocoa butter is the ingredient that allows chocolate to melt in your mouth at room temperature, and we use quite a lot of it in our recipes," says Frederic. Another reason for using the chocolate compound batter, is because it keeps chocolate from melting in hot countries like the UAE.

CHOCO-COATING

If you have ever wondered how the filling gets into your chocolate bar, or divine chocolate square, the answer is enrobing. Enrobing is an essential part of chocolate making, with the only difference being that smaller chocolatiers manage the whole enrobing process manually, by pushing the sheet on which the filling is laid out on, through the melted dripping chocolate, while in larger factories, expensive, automated enrobers coat the fillings – which crawl along the production line – with a thick layer of chocolate. The chocolate is then cooled down before being wrapped up.

THE WHOLE PACKAGE

The packaging stage is vital no matter what the size of the business is. Production date, and allergy information are included on all boxes at factories and chocolate shops. Factories usually have a robotic machine to wrap a certain number of bars in each box, however at gourmet chocolate boutiques, the chocolate is individually wrapped or placed manually into a box. Now you know why handmade, chocolate is pricier than bars on shelves!



'My kitchen has big doors that open into the garden so we have wonderful natural light, which is key for still photographs. The mezzanine means we can shoot TV shows from above, and as the TV crew prefer to work with artificial lights I have blackouts that I can pull down'

MY KITCHEN

James Martin

The BBC chef and regular Good Food contributor lets Holly Brooke-Smith in on how his home kitchen doubles up as a studio. Photographs DAVID MUNNS

Having worked in kitchens all his life, James Martin has become an influential figure on the British food scene. His father was catering manager on the Castle Howard estate in North Yorkshire, and James studied catering at Scarborough College. After moving to London to work for Antony Worrall Thompson and Marco Pierre White, he was appointed head chef at the first Hotel du Vin, in Winchester, when he was just 22. James went on to appear on the *BBC's Ready Steady Cook* in 1996 and later *Saturday Kitchen*, which he has presented for the past eight years. He lives near Winchester.

Tell us about the room

I spend a lot of time in this kitchen, testing all the recipes for my cookbooks. It's also where we film *Home Comforts* for the BBC. Although it's not a kitchen that most people would have at home, because it's been adapted to make space for the cameras, it works in my house because of my job – but I do cook for myself in here too.

Do you cook outside often?

When I have friends over, we normally fire up the clay oven and have pizzas. I built it seven years ago and I love it. I also have my Josper [a hybrid oven and grill] outside – I got it because I like to test new recipes for my restaurants on exactly the same equipment as they use in their kitchens.

You've got so many gadgets!

I have three Thermomixes, two Pacojets [a mousse and sorbet-maker], a dehumidifier, two Vitamixes, a vacuum packer, a water bath, two full-sized commercial fridges, a Big Green Egg barbecue, and several domestic and professional food mixers. When I'm cooking for a location, we'll do everything here, then vacuum-pack the whole lot. Taking the food in a sealed pack means you just snip the bags and throw them away. Then you're not left with hundreds of dirty trays and bowls to bring home. I even use it when I'm going on holiday to seal all my clothes, and fit more in the suitcase!

What gets the most use?

The stovetop. I don't use induction, I prefer gas – it's also much better visually, for filming. We've just put in a fantastic Wolf stove – it's a mix between a domestic and a commercial model, and really solid.

How about your knives?

I love my Kin knives – they're all handmade. You get what you pay for, and prices for these run into the hundreds. But they're the tools of my trade, so it's worth investing.

And chopping boards?

A lot of people use plastic – I hate glass – but I use wood. You've just got to look after it and clean it properly. I'm a big fan of wood in general.

Do you eat in here?

We do sometimes bring a big table in, when I have my mates down. I had Michel Roux Sr here for a dinner with 12 people recently, which

Photographs BBC PHOTOSALES, REX FEATURES



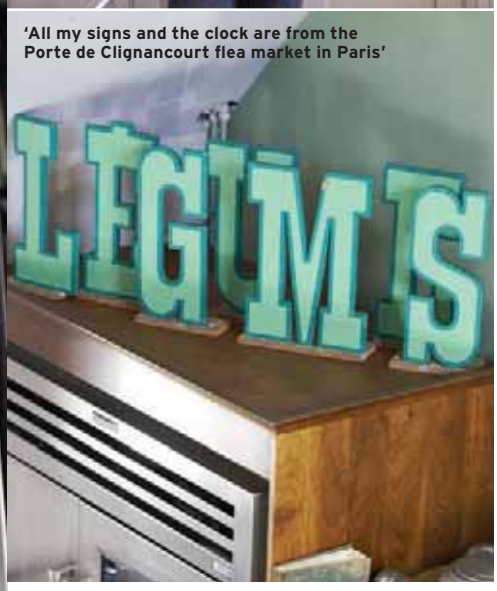
'The Victorinox knife at the bottom is one of the first I ever owned, as a teenager'



'My uncle is a stonemason and I appreciate anything that's been made by someone with craft and care'



'This block is an old cash register drawer that I use for seasonings'



'All my signs and the clock are from the Porte de Clignancourt flea market in Paris'

was a bit nerve-racking! But it's a good space and it does get used a lot.

What have you learned?

I'm a chef by trade – that's what I do. TV is great but when everything goes away, I'll still be a chef. It's all about the food – it's always food first. I think the key to having a long-term job in this industry is not being any different whether you're on camera or off. Nothing is easily given – as a chef you have to earn your success and people who can't cook are easily found out.



'My big round chopping board is from a Chinese supermarket in Soho. It's carved from one solid piece of wood and it's really heavy.'

What has changed?

TV is such a great medium to be a part of – it's constantly moving forward. And food has evolved and changed so much since 1989. Baking is big now, but in time it will be something else that has its moment in the limelight.

And the future?

I've no idea where everything is going. I'd love to do another series of *Food Map of Britain* – I'm hugely passionate about farmers and producers across the country.

GET THE LOOK



The oversized clock in James' kitchen is a real statement piece. The Dial wall clock can become your own statement clock, Dhs499 at The One.



This Polished Nickel lantern with leather handle adds a sophisticated touch. Dhs820 at Ethan Allen.



The glamorous Retro footed bowl is perfect for a trifle or pudding. Dhs490 at Villeroy & Boch.



A good knife is a cook's best friend; this Ceramic Chef's Knife is something you can hang on to, as James has to his first knife, for life. Dhs215 at Lakeland.



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Valentine family fun

Craving a romantic getaway but want to take the kids along too? The Iniala Beach House is the answer to your prayers! This ultra-exclusive resort in Phuket, Thailand, which has just ten beachfront villas, is offering a thoughtfully designed Valentine package suitable for families, balancing us-time with fun with the kids. The five night package includes a gourmet dinner for two at Aziamendi restaurant, (which is headed up by a Michelin-star chef) on February 14, and an array of activities to keep the kids occupied throughout the day, including cookery classes and treasure hunts, so that you get to enjoy the day in privacy. Other activities at the stunning designer hotel include boat cruises, temple tours and spa treats. Package prices start from US$17,000 (around Dhs62,400) for five nights, visit iniala.com.



CZECH CULINARY CHIC

Planning a trip to Prague? Add the Miura Hotel, located in the Besykydy region, to your itinerary, to enjoy a country escape unlike any other, while indulging in authentic flavours of the Czech Republic. Award-winning chef Michael Göth offers flavours of the region with high quality, local ingredients (most of which is sourced from within a few kilometer radius of the hotel) on a seasonally changing menu. The striking contemporary hotel set within a golf course provides the perfect setting for enjoying concoctions such as roasted venison saddle in wild rose sauce with chestnut mashed potatoes. Room rates start from €88 (around Dhs360), visit www.designhotels.com/miura-hotel.

FROM HONG KONG TO THE WORLD

Cathay Pacific is taking the trend of gourmet cuisine on flights to the next level having just announced a new partnership with the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group. The Hong Kong based brands will collaborate to provide first class passengers menus developed by top international chefs from the hotel chain, throughout 2015. Expect dishes from renowned chefs like Thierry Marx and Uwe Opocensky. A case of the journey becoming the destination? We think so!

Making travel for Muslims easier

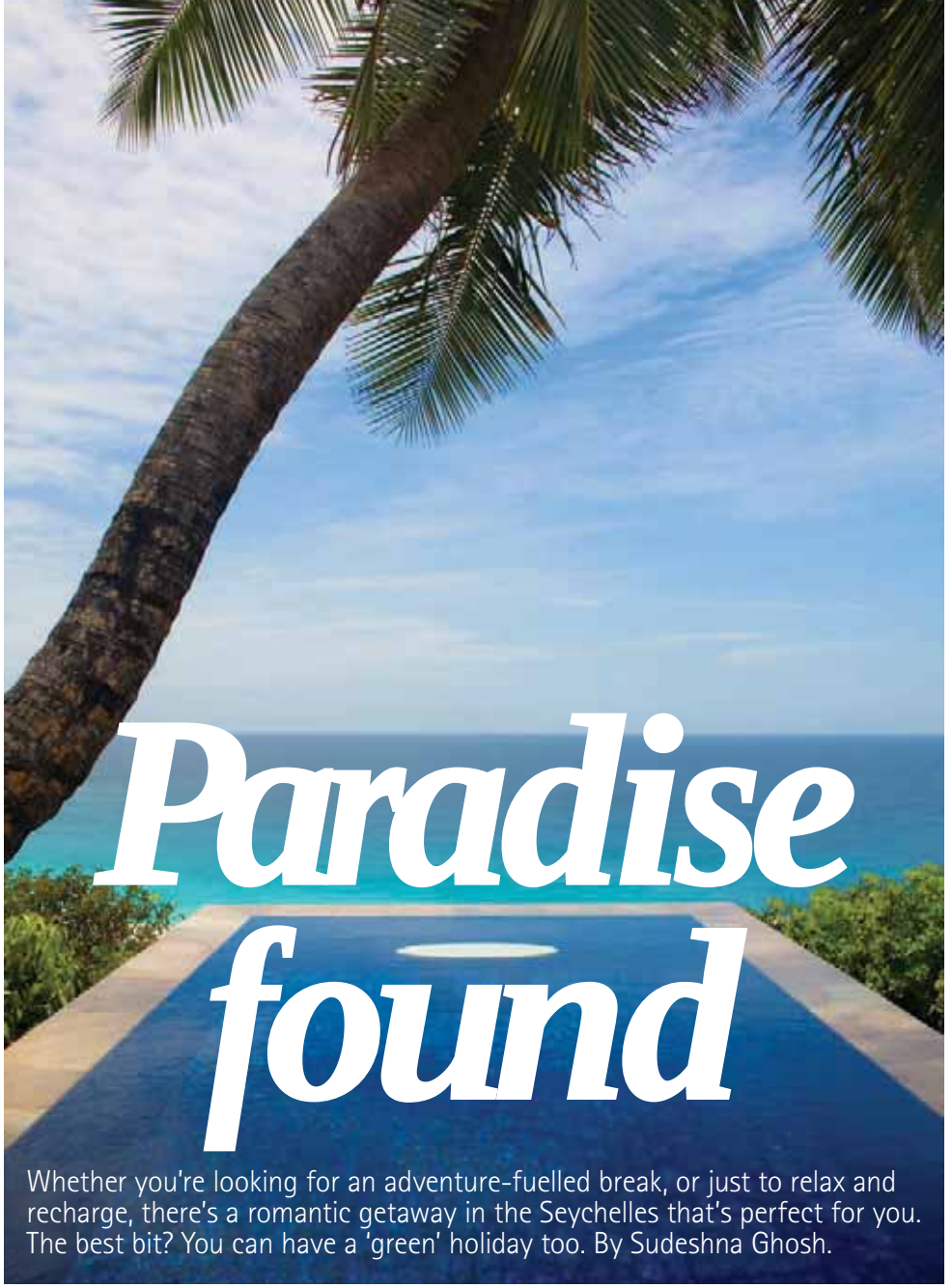
HalalTrip, a new mobile app designed to ease travel needs for Muslims has introduced a new foodspotting feature – users can rate and share Halal food around the world, be it Japan, Peru or Taiwan. The app is free on Apple and Android smartphones.

Stockholm syndrome



Sweden is tipped to be one of the hottest destinations for 2015, and it just got a lot hotter with the opening of the first Jamie Oliver restaurant in Scandinavia. Jamie's Italian has recently opened its doors at the Scandic Anglais hotel in Stockholm, to serve up his typical rustic-style Italian cuisine, using local, organic produce, at affordable prices. What's not to love? Find out more from scandichotels.com.

Text SUDESHNA GHOSH | Photographs SUPPLIED



Paradise found

Whether you're looking for an adventure-fuelled break, or just to relax and recharge, there's a romantic getaway in the Seychelles that's perfect for you. The best bit? You can have a 'green' holiday too. By Sudeshna Ghosh.

A holiday in the Seychelles is everything it looks like in the postcards – sun, sea, sand. But it's also so much more than that, with everything from adventure activities to gastronomic discoveries on offer. Beyond the crystal clear waters and powder white beaches, there's a dramatic topography of densely forested volcanic cliffs, a rich culture amalgamating a variety of influences, and a vibrant 'local life' that tourists can also partake of, beyond their luxury resorts. Here are two fab options offering drastically different experiences, with two things in common – the beautiful island, Mahé, they are set in, and an eco-friendly ethos.

FOR A DO-NOTHING KIND OF BREAK

Tucked away on the south-western tip of the island, on the relatively untouched Intendance bay, the **Banyan Tree Seychelles Resort** truly feels like a world away from everywhere else. The all-villa resort epitomises the ultimate in exclusive luxury with its Colonial-style décor – we defy you to not be awe-struck when walking into the high-ceilinged lobby where the balmy ocean breeze flows unhindered into the white louvred balconies – and friendly service.

Nestled amidst the lush tropical foliage, the luxe villas are designed to maximise the setting, with the outdoors blending in seamlessly into the indoors – think a large, landscaped garden with cosy seating area, infinity pool disappearing into the vast ocean beyond, and even a private outdoor Jacuzzi. Inside, the refreshing all-white interiors are accented by touches of Seychelles culture such as local art and island artefacts. With bathrooms featuring a sunken terrazzo bath with a view – plus kitted out with fragrant Banyan Tree amenities – the only decisions you might have to make are to choose which water body to lounge in first! With the sound of waves crashing, and a sea-palm tree-pool-beach view that you can never get tired of, this place is guaranteed to lull you into a state of sybaritic relaxation.

The beautiful, palm-fringed beaches beckon too, although being right by the big blue yonder – rather than within a secluded cove – means this is more of a lie by the beach (and pop in for the occasional dip) kind of place, as the waters can get

Photographs SUPPLIED

quite rough. Combine the beachside exertions with a trip to the award-winning spa – the brand is, after all, known for its spa expertise – to literally tick off everything on a do-nothing agenda. Open-air treatment pavilions, set high atop a hillside accessed through roughly hewn steps offer uninterrupted views and the ultimate in secluded escapism, while highly trained therapists offer Thai-inspired treatments using local ingredients.

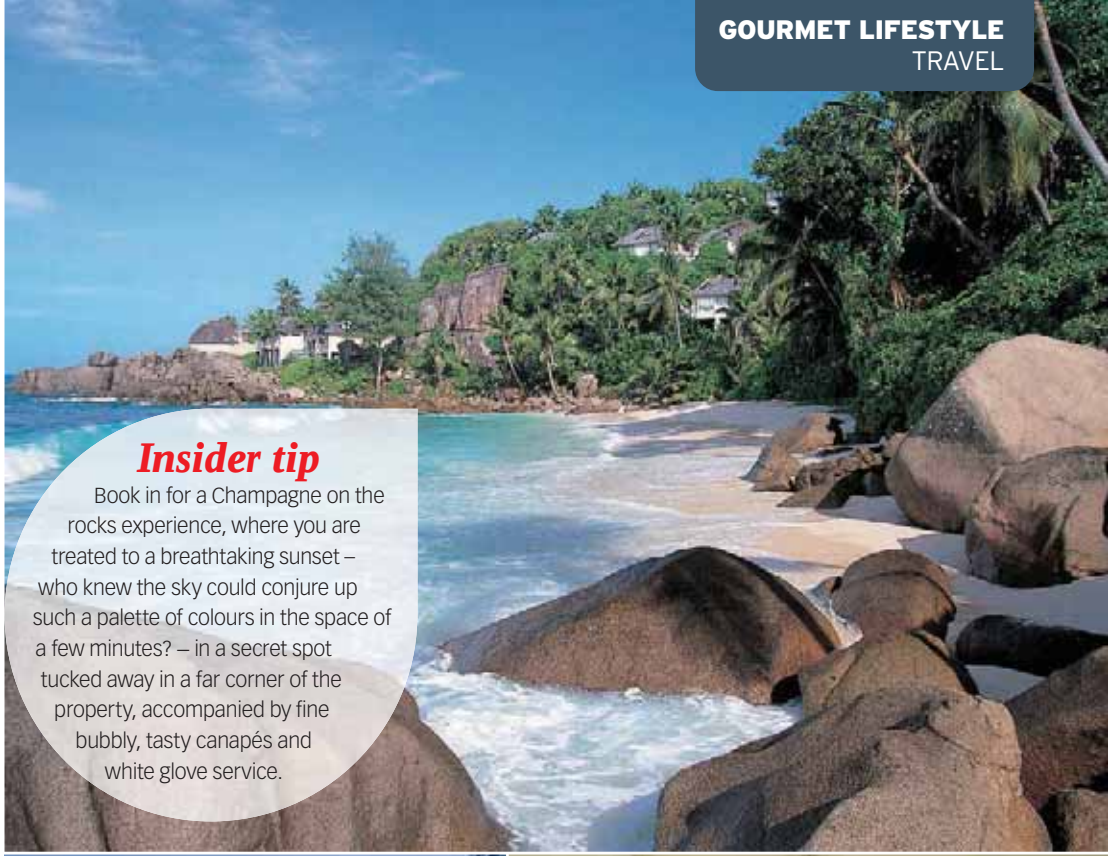
However, if you wanted to mix it up a bit, the resort also offers a range of activities, including a day trip to Victoria, the island's capital 'city' – a personalised itinerary can include a trip to the well-known Victoria market, as well as other attractions such as Morne Seychellois (the highest vantage point on the island where you can enjoy 360-degree views) and local restaurants offering specialties like the Seychelles staple, octopus curry.

What's the food like: With a new executive chef at the helm, and initiatives like an on-site organic herb and vegetable garden – where everything from lettuce and basil to pumpkin and zucchini is grown, with the intention to source a majority of ingredients for the resort's restaurants from here – the resort is definitely taking a deliciously green route to its guests' hearts.

Starting your day with breakfast at Chez Lamar, which does double duty as an elegant international restaurant after dark – complete with live music, and different theme nights including local cuisine and barbecue dinners – will set the right note. Set by a natural lagoon, it feels like dining amidst wilderness, although the fine food has nothing unsophisticated about it – whether it's the à la carte breakfast dishes or more-ish Seychelles-style fish curry.

The signature Saffron restaurant is a must-visit too – offering authentic Thai cuisine, it is an essential component in any Banyan Tree resort, in a nod to the brand's heritage. While contemporary Asian influences permeate the décor, the expansive verandah overlooking the moonlit bay offers the perfect setting for dinner à deux, sampling delicacies such as crispy fried calamari and fragrant red and green Thai curries.

However, for a truly romantic experience, their bespoke Destination Dining experiences win hands down – whether it's dining on the beach in a candlelit, petal-strewn setting; in a picturesque gazebo hidden amidst lush wetlands housed within the resort; or 'On the rocks' (See Insider tip).



Insider tip

Book in for a Champagne on the rocks experience, where you are treated to a breathtaking sunset – who knew the sky could conjure up such a palette of colours in the space of a few minutes? – in a secret spot tucked away in a far corner of the property, accompanied by fine bubbly, tasty canapés and white glove service.









Green creds: The Banyan Tree group has a Global Foundation, established in 2009, which facilitates supporting community empowerment and ecological initiatives. Guests have a US$2 surcharge per night added to their bill which goes towards saving endangered marine life and preserving coral reefs and wetlands. The Banyan Tree Seychelles beach is a popular one for turtle nesting (between October and February) – as a lot of care is taken to leave them undisturbed, in conjunction with local environmental authorities – so most guests visiting in this period are lucky enough to catch a natural miracle right under their noses, whether it's a mummy turtle laying eggs, or watching the baby hatchlings make their way back to sea. Sustainability measures in this resort range from developing its own organic farm to efforts at integrating the local community.

Take me there now: The Sense of Romance package includes three nights' stay in a pool villa, couple's spa treatment, and a unique Destination Dining experience, prices start from €1,156 (around Dhs4,750) per night. Visit banyantree.com for more. >>

FOR AN ACTIVE BREAK

Why go: The **Constance Ephelia Resort** is one of the largest resorts in Seychelles – it is like a little village in itself, with its own signposts and winding walkways – but that means even if all 309 rooms in the resort are full, you'd never feel crowded in. While ideal for families as well, for a truly romantic break, forego the suites and splash out on a private hillside villa. A cluster of villas set high on a hilltop, hidden amidst lush foliage, offer spacious luxury with floor-to-ceiling windows offering jaw-dropping views of broccoli-covered hillsides, a glittering turquoise ocean gently lapping at the crescent-shaped Port Launay beach (one of two beaches within the resort), and its very own private infinity pool. A room-sized bathroom area – it would be unfair to call it just a bathroom – with free-standing bath and outdoor rain showers, a roomy poolside outdoor deck and even a private spa treatment cabana mean that it will be hard to tear yourself away from the villa.

But there is plenty to tempt you within the 120-hectare property – from a zip line facility within the resort grounds to hiking trails and mangrove walks, you don't even have to go very far to get an adrenaline fix. There's also rock-climbing, water sports such as windsurfing, stand up paddle boarding and snorkelling on offer, as well as boat trips to other islands, mangrove kayaking, and lots more. A daily rota of other fun lighthearted activities including coconut classes (if you wanted to get creative with coconut shells!), tortoise feeding sessions (there is a tortoise habitat located on-site), cocktail-making lessons, and social sports options is also offered.

All the activity is perfectly counter-balanced by the luxurious U-spa, a rustic-style complex of thatched huts, open-air yoga pavilions, and tranquil water features in a tropical garden set-up, where you can indulge in relaxing treatments – what beach holiday is complete without one? – as well as yoga and meditation sessions.

MAHÉ MAGIC

When in Seychelles, don't miss the Saturday market in Victoria, the capital city of Seychelles, where you can find local produce, freshly caught seafood, spices, and handicrafts in a colourful melee of sights, sounds and smells. While the market is open every day of the week, Saturdays have the biggest market, and that's when the locals come to shop.





Insider tip

Forget waiting around forever for elusive buggies to transport you from spa to restaurant – villa guests get their own buggy to drive themselves around!















What's the food like: The Constance group of resorts, specialists in Indian Ocean properties, lay a lot of emphasis on their gastronomy – including hosting an annual culinary festival in association with Bernard Loiseau, wherein resort chefs are mentored by Michelin starred chefs from Europe and compete against each other. Small wonder then, that the five restaurants on this property give each other stiff competition when it comes to good food. Corossol is a vast all-day dining restaurant, while Helios offers Mediterranean-inspired breakfast and lunch buffets – including fresh seafood dishes – in a breezy, poolside setting. For local flavours, Seselwa is the place to head to, which offers a glimpse into Seychelloise cuisine – a Creole-island cuisine, with spice-infused curries and lots of seafood, bringing together influences from India, Africa and the ocean. Guests can also opt for breakfast at Seselwa, where the emphasis on healthy eating is evident from a separate section dedicated to gluten-free foods and other nutritious options. For an elegant dinner date, the resort's fine dining restaurant Cyann offers an elegant-meets-rustic chic setting for the gourmet menu that combines French culinary techniques with local ingredients – think crab and crispy prawn with prawn consommé jelly, and local red mullet with carrot trilogy and olive and garlic crumble. It's an equally attractive destination for lunch, with light dishes enjoyed alfresco on a private sandbank by the beach.

Green creds: The Constance Ephelia resort, set within a protected marine reserve, the Port Launay marine national park, has its own Eco-initiative focusing on low-impact operations, reducing energy and water use, biodiversity management and staff training. Its efforts are supported by the United Nations Development Programme, Global Environment Facility.

Take me there now: Room rates start from €500 (around Dhs2,060) per night for Junior suites, €1,800 for Hillside pool villa, visit constancehotels.com for more.

TRAVEL DIARY

GETTING THERE: Give your journey to the destination a Seychellois twist by flying Air Seychelles, which offers convenient direct flights to Mahe from Abu Dhabi nine times a week. The four-hour flight is comfortable and quick, especially if you fly business class where you can enjoy flavours of the island in dishes like coconut coated chicken breast with pineapple sauce, and grilled tiger prawn and red snapper with pumpkin chutney, and spacious seats, as well as the comforts of their quaint, cosy premium lounge at Mahe airport. Ticket prices start from US$1,877 (around Dhs6,890) for economy, and US$3,015 for business class. Visit airseychelles.com.

Your ready reckoner to:

The Dubai Food Carnival is back again this year from February 12-14 at a new venue, Dubai International Marine Club, Mena Seyahi. Part of the 23-day Dubai Food Festival, it promises to be an indulgent weekend packed with good food, celebrity chefs and entertainment for everyone.

Dubai Food Carnival

ATTRACTIONS



• **The Great Yalla BBQ**
Love manning the barbecue? Put your barbecue skills to the test at the BBQ playoffs, and challenges like The corporate cook-off relay, and So you think you can grill? Renowned chef , TV presenter, corporate Executive Chef for Meat and Livestock Australia, and *BBC Good Food ME* Awards judge Tarek Ibrahim will be hosting the event on all three days.

• **Ribs n' Bibs** Meat-lovers can compete against each other, and win the King of the Ribs title from Soho Grill, by eating as many barbecue back ribs as they can in ten minutes. The winner will get a dinner voucher worth Dhs500, to redeem at any of the Soho Grill outlets, as well as a medal and t-shirt with the title.

• **Food Academy** Get a chance to interact with top chefs like Oscar Rito from Tortuga, Taufiq Sutisna from Noodle House, and Lawrence Weels from Perry and Blackwelder Smokehouse, as they entertain foodies with cooking demonstrations. The area will also feature tons of competitions, and how-to sessions.

• **Street Nights** The Street Nights event preview – a community gathering of artists, musicians and street food concepts to be held on February 20 and 21 at Al Quoz as part of the Dubai Food Festival – will give visitors a taste of what to expect when it comes around, with sneak peeks at acts from live entertainers and street art performers.



• **Naughty corner** A wide range of activities are on offer for little ones, with the supervised zone featuring a crèche, bouncy castles, magicians, face painting, gaming consoles, and lots more.

• **Little Bakers** Children can hone their baking skills at a number of competitions hosted by Hummingbird Bakery.

RESTAURANTS

• **Casual dining** Haven't tried out the array of budget-friendly restaurants in the city? Head to the stands at the carnival to try smaller portions, so you know what to order when visiting the restaurant. Baja Fresh, Chez sushi café, Mandlicious, Shabu Shabu, and Panda Express.are a few to try.

• **Fine dining** Instead of burning a hole in your pocket, sample some of the specialties on offer from the city's finest restaurants, at a reasonable price. A variety of cuisines are available, from Indian at Signature by Sanjeev Kapoor, to Mexican at Tortuga Mexican Kitchen. Wolfgang Puck Express, Perry and Blackwelder's Smokehouse, and Prime 68, are some other top choices to try.

• **Nibbles** Stop by Eclair for miniature pieces of the delectable French dessert, Holland House Mini pancakes, to try the treat doused in chocolate sauce, and Popcornopolis for gourmet popcorn.

CELEBRITY CHEFS

Catch demos and masterclasses at The Chef's Dome and Cooking Academy live cooking zones.



• **Silvena Rowe**
The celebrated chef, TV personality, and founder of Omnia Gourmet café, has been a popular face in the UAE's culinary scene. She specialises in Middle Eastern cooking, and gluten, dairy-and sugar-free dishes.

• **Sanjeev Kapoor**
The award-winning Indian chef, restaurateur and cookbook author has long been a global ambassador for Indian cuisine, and is a regular visitor to the UAE, with multiple restaurants here.



• **Manal Al Alem**
The TV show host and cookbook author is well-known within the Arabic community.
"At the Dubai Food Carnival, I will show you how to cook with a smile. I'll be creating simple and quick recipes that are tasty and nutritious, and will also share creative cooking tips."
- Manal Al Alem

NEED TO KNOW Standard advance tickets are Dhs30 per person, and Dhs20 for Emirates NBD card holders. Entry is free for children below 12. Visit www.dubaifoodcarnival.com.

Photographs SUPPLIED

etisalat DUBAI KIDS' RUN

20 | 21 MARCH 2015

Supported by BASF

THE FIRST EVER DUBAI KIDS RUN WILL BE HELD ON MARCH 20-21 AT DUBAI MEDIA CITY. ARE YOU GOING TO BE A PART OF IT?

A revolutionary new event that will bring families and the community together, while spreading the message of healthy living.

The two-day event will include:

- 2km run for 4-8 year-olds (accompanied)
- 2km run for ages 9-12 (solo)
- 4km 'wheelie' fun run that everyone can get involved in (free-style running, skateboarding, scooters, pushchairs, it's all OK!), on a purpose-built course.
- Fun-fair at the Dubai Media City amphitheatre that will have plenty of activities and entertainment for children and adults alike!



Sounds fun?

Find out more and register:
www.thedubaikidsrun.com

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Official Food Publication Partner: BBC good food Middle East

Competition







Win!

A weekend getaway worth **Dhs7,500**

Spend an action-packed weekend at this new luxury hotel in the capital. Get a chance to win a two-night stay in a suite, inclusive of breakfast, a meal for two, and tickets to Ferrari World or Yas Waterpark.

Southern Sun Abu Dhabi, a modern, luxurious glass-exterior hotel located in the heart of the capital, offers striking, contemporary interiors, making it a stylish escape for those who want to stay amidst all the action in the city, whether it's visiting cultural attractions or getting an adrenaline fix. The hotel's culinary offerings are nothing short of spectacular, with options like Kahraman for contemporary Middle Eastern cuisine, and the all-day dining restaurant, The Foundry, where a hot-and-happening Friday jazz brunch, serves everything from succulent steak, to lobster thermidor and a fine selection of oysters. The hotel is also home to a number of lounges and bars – if a relaxed night after a busy day at a theme park or water park is more up your alley.

The winner gets a two-night stay in a suite, breakfast at The Foundry, a meal for two at Kahraman, and two tickets to Ferrari World or Yas Waterpark.

Scan this QR code to go straight to our website.

Log on to bbcgoodfoodme.com
to enter this competition and simply answer this question:

Name one of the restaurants at Southern Sun Abu Dhabi?

*Terms & conditions apply. Flights are not included in this prize. Employees of CPI Media Group are not eligible to enter. Winners will be selected on random basis from correct entries.

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Competitions

Fabulous prizes, from dining vouchers to event passes, up for grabs.



WIN! DINNER FOR TWO AT SONTAYA, THE ST. REGIS SAADIYAT ISLAND, ABU DHABI, WORTH OVER DHS600.

Take your loved one to a romantic dinner, this Valentine's Day, and enjoy a special set menu of octopus salad with spicy beetroot dressing, crispy crab parcel, and Tom yum lobster bisque, for starters. Choose from Osso bucco, sweet and sour chilli duck, or rainbow rice noodles for mains, and round up the meal with a special dessert.

WIN! BBQ DINNER FOR SIX AT THE POOLSIDE RESTAURANT, GRAND HYATT DUBAI, WORTH OVER DHS1,100.

One lucky winner can take five friends along to enjoy juicy, tender grills like meat, seafood and more, at the barbecue area by the pool. It's a great way to relax on a Thursday or Friday evening, and tuck into hot food while enjoying the great weather. Don't forget to save space for desserts!





WIN! A VOUCHER TO THE BUBBLORANGE BRUNCH AT C.TASTE, CENTRO BARSHA, WORTH OVER DHS700.

Take along three friends to this casual Friday Brunch, which has been creatively designed to serve up a wide array of starters, mains and desserts in hues of orange. Salads and appetisers are available at a buffet spread, but mains like salmon and meat dishes are brought to the table for mains. End the brunch with homemade cakes and pastries.

WIN! BRUNCH VOUCHER AT SEVILLA, AL RAHA BEACH HOTEL, AND ENTRY TICKETS TO THE ABU DHABI FOOD FESTIVAL STREETFEAST, WORTH OVER DHS 500.

One lucky winner can get their hands on a brunch voucher for two at Sevilla restaurant (on February 20) to feast on dishes from an extensive buffet spread, while listening to tunes from the in-house band. The lucky winner also gets four tickets to the StreetFeast in Al Ain (February 5-21), where they can indulge in specialties from food trucks.





WIN! DINNER FOR TWO AT ZAYTOUN, CROWNE PLAZA DUBAI FESTIVAL CITY, WORTH OVER DH350.

One winner and a dining partner can enjoy the Mashawi night, which takes place daily, and order dishes like the signature premium cut steak. Unbeatable views of the Dubai skyline, and some of the best grills in town, make this restaurant a great choice for a weeknight dinner.

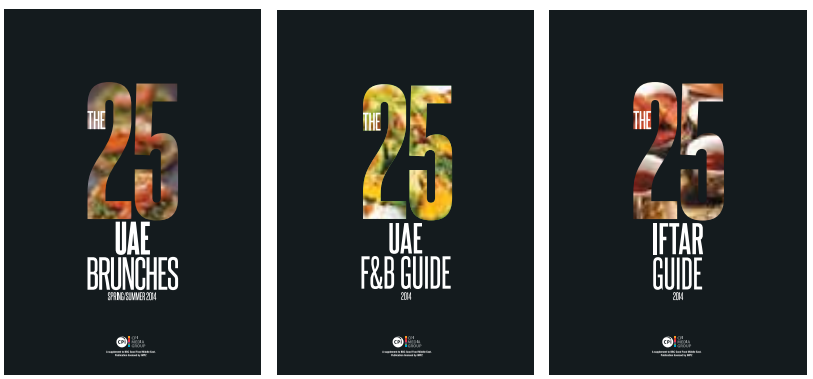
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Power lunches in the **new business age**

Steven Pradia, Assistant Editor of CFO magazine, muses on how, with the old way of conducting business going through paradigm shifts, the way we eat is also changing.

The CFO Middle East is a monthly magazine which celebrates the ever-evolving role of today's Chief Financial Officer, by providing critical analysis, guidance and comment for CFOs and the individuals who work with them on a regular basis.





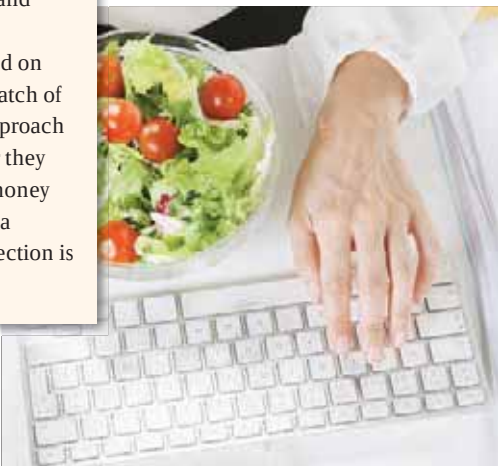












The largest deals have historically found their legs at the once all-important power lunch. Executives across a range of industries have traditionally loosened their belts and let their hair down when the comfort of good cuisine rests just next to the transaction at hand. Attempting to match the outsized ambitions of the boardroom with extravagance at mealtimes however usually springs the firm's Chief Financial Officer into action. As a result CEOs are often at odds with their CFOs over just how lavish discretionary spending should be. From debates surrounding corporate jet travel to bonus structures, the conversation oftentimes leads to assessing meal valuation.

Despite the lunch set's prevalence in generations past, a new breed of on the go, social media savvy executives are more prone to take meals at their desk and in meetings, a trend which CFOs are keen to encourage. Time worn methods that encouraged the value of face-to- face interactions are now being confronted by the next generation of millennials who operate based on opposing ethos, which value remaining tethered to the virtual bonds which exist in the office. The transition has been embraced by the financial minders of many enterprises and have resulted in trading costly, hours-long outings for laptop crumbs incurred during Skype pow wows.

An increasing number of companies intent on leveraging the changing landscape are emboldening the model of avoiding tiresome out-of-office lunch meetings by offering options closer to home. Cafeterias dedicated exclusively to staff members, as well as free lunch ordered in at the company's expense on days which require all hands on deck, have become tools for cost cutting whilst positively impacting output. CFOs with their eyes aimed even more closely at the bottomline are proffering healthy meal options which simultaneously target the company's health insurance spend.

Key to the CFOs' attention to reigning in oversized lunch and dinner meetings is the amount of time spent away from the office. Employees are turning increasingly to virtual meetings staged online, which maintains the business' accessibility to these individuals' abilities. Heavy meals owe to half days' of productivity lost, which simultaneously dampen bottomlines, in an environment where employees increasingly need to stay connected to their base of operations. The formal nature of five-star lunches has also impeded the creative flow which communal lunch gatherings aim to correct. The pageantry attending so called high powered meetings over steak tartare and asparagus don't always equate to the yields which on-the-go bites to eat often result in.

In my experience, the business landscape is taking on new form in a number of ways based on the modern technology platforms. I've found that the ever present mobile nature of a new patch of movers and shakers is forcing CFOs with their ears to the ground to likewise mould their approach to corporate financing. Expenses related to employee meals are transitioning in the manner they exist as necessities aimed at landing key partnerships. As such, dialing back the amount of money spent outside of the office is proving to be a tweak for the better. By acting as more than just a money saving measure but also a new tool for enabling gung ho staff members, this new direction is solidifying business operations by ensuring that employees stick closer to headquarters.

PAX
RISTORANTE & LOUNGE



From Northern Italy, With Love

1 - 28 February 2015

Relish onto the realms of gastronomic pleasures as PAX Ristorante & Lounge reveals the coveted tastes of Northern Italy. The rich flavours of the North bear a vintage of Italian traditions while exuding a sophisticated flair on the finish.

Entrees on the spotlight include Vitello Tomato (Pink thick slices of roasted veal with tuna dip), Ravioli Di Manzo Al Sugo D'Arrosto, Funghi e Spinaci Novelli (Beef ravioli tossed in a natural veal jus, forest mushrooms and spinach) and Costata Di Manzo Con Zucchine e Peperoni Saltati in Padella (Grilled T-bone steak with pan-fried zucchini and capsicum), and more.

Dusit Thani
DUBAI

For reservations, call +971 4 317 4515 or
e-mail dine.dtdu@dusit.com

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